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LEADER OF THE PACK



How Paul Ryan took charge
of the Republican party

BY STEPHEN E. HAYES

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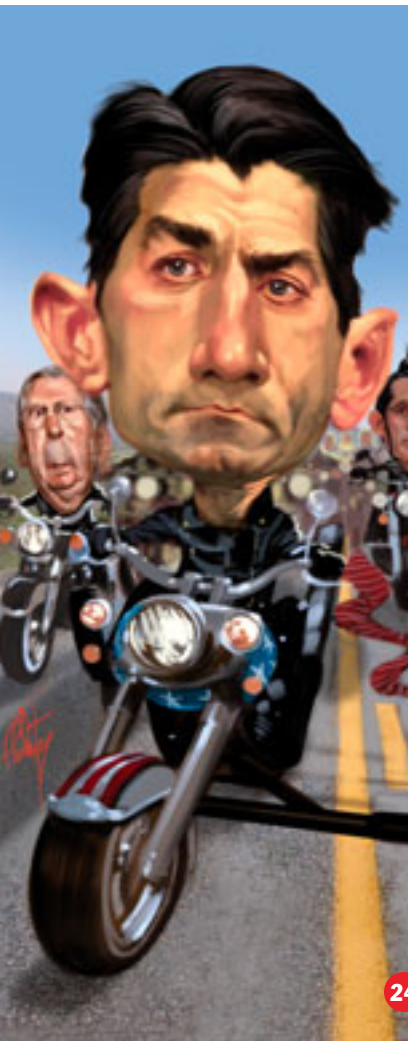
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Reston-Broder Syndrome Claims Victim

Dana Milbank is a *Washington Post* columnist whose progressive politics and world-weary posture have earned him coveted berths in the *Post*'s opinion and news pages. THE SCRAPBOOK wishes him the best. But THE SCRAPBOOK is also worried that, at 44, Milbank is showing signs of early-onset Reston-Broder Syndrome.

This is a mood disorder, primarily confined to members of the press, which manifests itself by repeated assertions that political conditions cannot possibly be worse than they are at present, and that there was once a Golden Age to which the sufferer would like to return.

The syndrome, not yet recognized by the American Psychiatric Association, is named for the late David Broder of the *Post*, who liked to write about the good old days when Democrats and Republicans appeared to have no political or personal differences, and the late James Reston of the *New York Times*, who was forever in pursuit of younger, fresher, self-evidently better political leadership.

THE SCRAPBOOK remembers its first exposure to Reston-Broder Syndrome in the late 1950s, when Reston would habitually complain to the *Times* that the political leadership of the West was geriatric, sclerotic, and embarrassing. Of course, it should be remembered that he was talking about

such geriatric, sclerotic, and embarrassing leaders as Dwight D. Eisenhower, Harold Macmillan, Konrad Adenauer, and Charles de Gaulle—and, presumably, yearning for young John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. Beginning in the 1980s, Broder would routinely hark back to those near-perfect days on Capitol Hill (the 1950s?) when Democrats and Republicans would enjoy a whiskey together at the end of the day—and Democrats commanded prohibitive majorities in both House and Senate.

THE SCRAPBOOK sensed the telltale signs of Reston-Broder Syndrome last week when Milbank wrote a column in which he lamented the practice of Senate Republicans of dissenting from the views of their Democratic colleagues. After consultation with “senators and veteran Capitol Hill correspondents,” he swiftly realized what ails the Senate: “There are no giants in the chamber today,” he wrote. No Edward Kennedys, no Robert Byrds.

THE SCRAPBOOK will refrain from repeating the sordid details of Teddy Kennedy's public (and private) career, but that Milbank believes the U.S. Senate suffers from the absence of Bobby Byrd suggests that his Reston-Broder symptoms are dangerously advanced. Byrd, who died two summers ago, was an especially unattractive

officeholder who began his career as a ranking member of the Ku Klux Klan in his native West Virginia, and ended it (at 93) as the longest-serving senator in history. Between those two landmarks he managed to oppose the two African-American nominees to the Supreme Court, as well as the 1964 Civil Rights Act; and, as long-time chairman of the Appropriations Committee, devoted himself almost exclusively to shipping federal dollars to the aforementioned West Virginia, where innumerable taxpayer-financed structures bear his name.

It is true that the relative age of the Senate is younger than, say, a decade ago, and the chamber is dominated by a new generation. It is also true that nearly half of today's senators are freshmen. But is this, by any definition, a bad thing? Milbank seems to confuse advanced age and prolonged tenure with distinction, and surely forgets that even Teddy Kennedy and Bobby Byrd were young once.

Indeed, THE SCRAPBOOK is reminded of a story Harold Macmillan liked to tell about an ancient parliamentarian who, in Macmillan's youth, complained to him about the absence of giants in the House of Commons: “They're all gone now, my boy, all gone . . . Palmerston, Disraeli, Gladstone, Salisbury. . . All gone. . . And I'm not feeling so well myself.” ♦

Big Labor's Big Money

For the last few weeks the Obama campaign has been sending out urgent fundraising appeals highlighting the fact that Mitt Romney outraised them by \$30 million last month. “That translates into a potentially devastating sweep of negative, misleading messaging that's going to flood the airwaves in swing states,” read the most recent Obama email to land in THE SCRAPBOOK's inbox. (Oddly, the email neglected

to mention the Obama campaign has significantly outspent the Romney campaign in swing state advertising.) While the desperation here is real, let's not kid ourselves: The Obama campaign will not be outspent in this election.

The Obama penury claim can only be made because the conventional ways of monitoring Democratic campaign spending are woefully incomplete. Last week, the *Wall Street Journal* published a new analysis showing that unions had spent an astounding \$4.4 billion on election-

eering since 2005—four times as much money as previously thought. Union political expenditures actually exceed direct donations to candidates. Further, this new information was collected from Department of Labor databases, not the Federal Election Commission (FEC). The Bush administration began requiring unions to report certain categories of political spending to the Labor Department in 2005, and this appears to be the first time any major news organization has tried to quantify the data.

To sum up: Even though Demo-

crats bellyache constantly about money in politics and shadowy GOP super-PACs, their largest campaign contributors don't report 75 percent of the money they spend to the FEC. Naturally, the union spin on the *Wall Street Journal* report was at once brazen and disingenuous: "Laurence E. Gold, counsel to the AFL-CIO, said the Labor Department reports show that 'unions by law are the most transparent institutions about their electoral spending.'"

If unions are so proud of their transparency, why is it that Democrats tried and failed to exempt unions from the rules they would impose on corporate political expenditures? In 2010, in the wake of the much demonized *Citizens United* ruling by the Supreme Court, Democrats tried to pass the DISCLOSE Act, which would have imposed all sorts of limits on corporate campaign donations—but curiously would have "exempt[ed] from disclosure requirements transfers of cash from dues-funded groups to their affiliates to pay for certain election ads," according to *Politico*. Fortunately, the DISCLOSE Act didn't pass.

This strange new respect for transparency is also at odds with the Obama administration's rollback of Bush administration transparency requirements aimed at exposing corruption and cleaning up union governance. They've stopped enforcing the requirement that union bosses disclose whether they're being paid on the side by companies doing business with the union and stopped reporting what unions do with their strike funds.

Now that this other Bush-era transparency requirement shows that unions are the largest political spenders even though they represent a small minority of Americans, expect the Obama administration to quietly do away with it if the president is reelected. Sure, unions spend more on politics by an order of magnitude than any other interest group, but it's stepping all over the preferred narrative that the Koch brothers are buying this election.



In the meantime, the Obama campaign can tone down the breathless fundraising emails, confident in the knowledge that they won't be outspent. Republicans can take solace in the fact that of the 63 Democratic House seats they captured in 2010, they were outspent in two-thirds of the races and still won. Money in politics, as in life, isn't everything. ♦

Get Well Soon

While THE SCRAPBOOK is as prone to bouts of *Schadenfreude* as anyone, we are occasionally reminded of the call to sum-

mon the better angels of our nature. Last week *American Spectator* senior editor and occasional WEEKLY STANDARD contributor Quin Hillyer set an example that all in Washington should, but won't, heed. Faced with the news that Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. had disappeared to receive treatment for an as-yet-unknown personal problem, Hillyer wrote:

Jesse Jackson the elder is one of my least favorite pols, EVER. His son certainly isn't of the most stellar character either, and he's a real left winger. But none of that matters. His current problems, whatever they are, sound serious—and they are of the type that call for compassion and sympathy,

not scorn. He is a human being who appears to be suffering; I offer a prayer for his recovery.

As it happens, I know of one particular incident, private in nature so I won't relay any specifics of it (it was told to me by a first-hand witness; I didn't see it myself), that speaks well of some basic instincts toward personal decency within the heart of the younger Jackson. Suffice it to say that he reached out, supportively, when somebody across the aisle was down. Conservatives should do likewise for Rep. Jackson. May he find solace and health—so we can go back to opposing him politically when he errs in that realm, which is often, but not opposing him personally or meanly.

We freely admit that it wasn't the initial impulse of *THE SCRAPBOOK* to say this, but upon considering what Hillyer has to say, we also find ourselves wishing Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. a speedy recovery. ♦

Lipstick on a Pig

During the Reagan administration, at a time of undeniable and often rapid economic growth, conservatives began to notice an unusual phenomenon. No matter how good the economy appeared to be, the media would fall all over themselves to explain that, no, things were actually horrible, homelessness was epidemic, poverty rampant—proof of the callous failure of Reaganomics.

Not surprisingly, we are experiencing the opposite effect now that Barack Obama is president. Sure, the economy's moribund and the president's spectacularly bad policies have contributed to immiserating the lives of millions of the unemployed and underemployed—but the *New York Times* is here to explain that it's really not that bad. "In Latest Data on Economy, Experts See Signs of Pickup," ran one headline on July 13. We started reading, hoping to find out how we had missed the news that happy days are here again. Well, not so fast. The article is a case study on how journalists go about apply-

ing lipstick to a pig. *THE SCRAPBOOK* is selectively quoting here, but we're fairly representing the essence of the *Times* piece:

This week, Macroeconomic Advisers, an economic consultancy often cited by policy makers, estimated the annual rate of growth in the second quarter at just 1.2 percent—well below the pace needed to reduce the unemployment rate. . . . "The pace of economic growth is picking up, but not to a rate that is very robust." . . . Some of the recent headwinds—like a re-escalation of the euro zone crisis, households that are paying down their debt, and a falloff in growth in big emerging markets, like China and Brazil—remain. . . . "The soft patch could easily extend through year-end or almost a full year." . . . The weaker-than-expected spring data has raised speculation that the Federal Reserve might announce a new round of bond buying this summer to spur growth. . . . Mr. Prakken said the initial unemployment claims "suggest that the labor market has not fallen out of bed." He added, "There's been a pause in hiring, a momentary pause in hiring."

To be fair, the article does note a few minor reasons for optimism, such as lower oil prices and better auto sales. However, even the most optimistic projections in the article—such as Macroeconomic Advisers' forecast that GDP growth will double from a horrendous 1.2 percent to a dismal 2.4 percent—aren't exactly reasons to pop the champagne corks. You might think the tone of a headline should reflect what a story actually reports. But so long as Barack Obama is up for reelection, the *New York Times* is happy to make an in-kind donation to his campaign. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

It was perhaps fitting that Representative Barney Frank met his future husband, Jim Ready, at a political fund-raiser in 2005. 'I told him I had a crush on him for 20 years,' said Mr. Ready, recalling that as a teenager . . . " (*New York Times*, July 7). ♦

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Ex Post Facto

I first began reading the *Washington Post* sometime in 1956-57, whenever I learned to read in the course of first grade. One of my parents had declared that newspapers were deliberately written at a fifth-grade level, and I was determined to find out what “fifth-grade level” meant. I discovered that it meant slightly incomprehensible to a 6-year-old; but the four comics pages were a reasonable point of entry, and from there I graduated by stages to the status of daily newspaper reader.

In those days, the *Post* called itself the *Washington Post and Times-Herald*, having purchased Cissy Patterson’s old outlet in 1954, and there were two other local competitors: the *Washington Daily News*, an afternoon tabloid which my parents considered beneath their dignity, and the *Evening Star*, another afternoon paper with decidedly Republican sympathies and an older pedigree than the *Post*.

For whatever reason, I much preferred the *Star*: To a juvenile reader, at any rate, it seemed more interesting and accessible, and contained features (show biz columnists Earl Wilson and Sheila Graham, for example) ordinarily disdained by the *Post*. In due course, however, the *Evening Star* began to fade. In the early 1970s it was purchased by an ambitious Texan magnate named Joe Allbritton, who then bought the *Daily News* and changed the name of his conglomerate to the *Washington Star-News*.

As sometimes happens in these circumstances, the new *Star* acquired the personality of the old *Daily News*, and bore little resemblance to the *Evening Star* of happy memory. Allbritton ultimately sold the package to Time Inc., which changed its name to the *Washington Star* and, with the

elegant exception of the editorial pages (edited by Edwin M. Yoder Jr.), pushed it further downhill until closing it forever in 1981.

By then I was living in Los Angeles, working at the *Los Angeles Times*, and would see the *Post* only at irregular intervals. I had long since formed the opinion that the *Post* had the pretensions of a great newspaper without



the ingredients—the cultural coverage, then and now, in the *New York Times* is incomparably more sophisticated—and that the Watergate affair, paradoxically, had only made things worse. Forty years have now passed since the famous break-in, but while the *Post* is still advertising its defeat of Richard Nixon, it remains at best an impressive provincial newspaper.

When I returned to the Washington area, exactly 20 years ago, I found to my dismay that everything I had once disliked about the *Post* had only been magnified. Having grown up in suburban Maryland, now living in suburban Virginia, I was alternately distressed and frustrated by its contemptuous attitude toward those communities, which contain (I presume) the great majority of its subscribers. The *Post*’s political bias is hardly worth mentioning, but sometimes its hostility to conservatives in general, and Republicans

in particular, has an obsessive quality.

To this is added, I confess, a series of personal grievances. A Pulitzer finalist in Distinguished Commentary—“distinguished,” indeed!—I was strung along for a year as a potential columnist for the *Post* syndicate until the late Meg Greenfield nixed me in favor of an Oprah wannabe named Donna Britt. When my mother died I had the misfortune to deal with an especially officious obituary writer. And of course, most humiliating of all, the *Post* failed to review my book about Ike, FDR, and the American Century.

But because I was, and remain, a daily newspaper reader, and because life contains a certain measure of uncomfortable compromise, I continued my habit of subscribing to the *Post* despite its occasional juvenile tone, its unrelenting political warfare, Marxist business columnists, and omnipotent sports reporters, and its practice of regarding Northern Virginia as a forbidding wasteland of bigots and philistines.

Until the day came, not so long ago, when it occurred to me that the solution to my dilemma lay in plain sight. A free copy of the *Post* is available at my office, where I can read it without having to pay for the privilege of being annoyed and insulted on a regular basis. And thus, with scarcely the bat of an eye, I canceled my subscription.

Since I seldom eat breakfast at home, and read the paper in installments throughout the day, the absence of the *Post* in my driveway every morning has proved painless. My alluring wife misses the routine on weekends, and so occasionally spends our hard-earned wages on a Sunday edition. But that is all right: At such rates, I calculate, I am enriching Starbucks (where she buys it), not *Post* shareholders like Warren Buffett. And the only feature I genuinely care about, at this stage in life, is the obituary page.

PHILIP TERZIAN

Life of Henry

In May, the Obama campaign unveiled its “Life of Julia,” a website detailing “how President Obama’s policies help one woman over her lifetime—and how Mitt Romney would change her story.” Julia is a composite character, the invention of one of the several hundred minions toiling away at Obama headquarters in Chicago. She is intended to illustrate, in a literal and rather vulgar way, the benefits of the entitlement state, from Head Start to student loans to Obamacare.

But Julia and people like her are not the sole residents of the United States. Nor is America divided simply between superrich plutocrats who make up 1 percent of the country and desperate beneficiaries of government largesse who make up the other 99. One can slice and dice our huge population in innumerable ways, isolating and identifying countless groups, many of which are in positions vastly different from Julia’s. Consider Henry. For Henry, President Obama has been no help at all.

H.E.N.R.Y. is marketing slang, first used in *Fortune* in 2003, for High Earners who are Not Rich Yet. Henrys run households with annual incomes between \$100,000 and \$250,000. There are about 21 million of them. Henrys make up the overwhelming majority of affluent consumers, who account for 40 percent of consumer spending—which in turn is 70 percent of economic activity. It’s no exaggeration to say that without the Henrys’ getting and spending, the U.S. economy would be much poorer.

One can find Henry and his family in the affluent suburbs and exurbs surrounding cities like Washington, D.C., New York, and Los Angeles, or in the counties of suburban Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, Raleigh, and Philadelphia. He is often a small businessman. He owns his house. He plans to send his children to college. He shops at Target, Saks, Coach, Restoration Hardware, Banana Republic, and, on special occasions, Tiffany.

Henry and his wife voted for Barack Obama in 2008

because he promised to end the war in Iraq and change the tone in Washington. He seemed calm and in control during the financial crisis. After eight years of Bush, Henry thought it was time to try something new.

But the Obama years have not been kind. Henry’s economic fortunes have bobbed up and down. He’s never been flush, but he’s never been broke, either. So much to him seems dependent on forces outside his control—whether the Fed engages in another round of quantitative easing, whether the eurozone survives for another week, whether neighbors feel confident enough in their finances to buy things at his shop.

Henry’s business survived the recession, but revenue is down. It’s been hard for him to secure a loan. His net worth fell drastically between 2007 and 2010, according to the Federal Reserve. The house has lost value. His father has started receiving Social Security and Medicare and sometimes needs help with expenses. Health care premiums continue to rise.

Henry noticed a change in Obama sometime in 2009. The president seemed less interested in the economy than in overhauling the nation’s health care system. He was dismissive of polls showing that the public opposed his plan, and derisive of Republican proposals to reform medical malpractice law and sell health insurance plans across state lines. Even after the Democrats lost control of the House of Representatives in 2010, Obama remained fixed on defending his unpopular and unworkable health law and increasing taxes on the “rich.”

Henry watched the news. He wondered why well-connected companies that proved to be poor credit risks, such as Solyndra and Abound Solar, could find financing, but his business could not. He shook his head in bewilderment when he heard economists say that Washington’s bailout of banks had provided them an implicit guarantee that lowers their borrowing costs—amounting to an annual



subsidy of \$120 billion. He could not believe how public employee unions colluded with politicians to obtain high salaries and lavish benefits for their members, and then vociferously fought the slightest attempt at reform. He got a headache thinking of the magnitude of the federal deficit and debt.

Henry supported repealing Obama's health law not because of ideological commitment, but because he dreaded the forthcoming regulations and tax increases. He knew that the Medicare payroll tax hike and investment income surtax, along with the employer health insurance mandate, would raise the cost of labor and weaken his ability to hire. Nor could he afford lobbyists to petition the Department of Health and Human Services for a waiver. The largest corporations and wealthiest donors could buy access to Obama's government. Henry could not.

Time and again, Obama officials said the economy was improving. Each time, the improvement turned out to be transitory or illusory. The president's one constant ambition, it seemed, was to increase taxes on households making more than \$250,000 a year—yet in his speeches, the president emphasized that “millionaires and billionaires” could “afford to pay a little bit more.”

Henry is not a millionaire. He makes less than \$250,000. But his goal is to have a successful business, and make as much money as he can to pay for his mortgage, utilities, gas bill, credit cards, loans for business and education, maintenance for the house, furnishings for the house, groceries, property and life insurance, and, if the situation is good, vacation and travel.

What's the incentive to cross that \$250,000 threshold if Obama is just going to tax more of his earnings? Why do the Democrats lump Henry's ambition to make an extra \$1,000 or more with that of millionaires and billionaires who have already made fortunes? Henry could see raising taxes on billionaires. He's never met one. But he has plenty of friends who make a little more than \$250,000 and are still by no means “rich.” What's Obama got against them?

Moreover, if Congress does nothing, it won't be only Charles Koch and Sheldon Adelson and Warren Buffett who see their income tax go up at the end of the year. Under current law, income taxes at every level, along with payroll taxes for which Henry is responsible, are scheduled to increase on January 1. Henry will be hit as an individual and as an employer. Many liberals, he suspects, would not really mind if taxes on all income groups increased.

Henry does not follow politics closely, but every time he sees the president on television, Obama is throwing goodies at a special interest group or fundraising in front of Hollywood celebrities. Obama's agenda—more taxes and regulations and spending, immigration and same-sex marriage—seems either totally divorced from or inimical to Henry's everyday reality. The president remains a powerful American symbol, and seems more likable on the stump than in giving a speech, but Henry and his wife

seriously doubt that they can vote for him again. Contrary to what Obama says, the state of the country has not improved since 2008. The state of the country is worse.

Yet Henry also has misgivings about the Republican nominee. He does not know much about Mitt Romney, but what he has seen is not reassuring. Romney sometimes appears insincere, impersonal, and ill at ease. He keeps telling people he's not a career politician, even though he's been in national politics since 1994. Romney laughs awkwardly. His most passionate moment was when he told some hecklers, “Corporations are people.” Henry is more worried about Romney's vagueness than about Bain Capital, but he's not going to march to the barricades for private equity, either. He knows what will happen in a second Obama term: Government will grow, and there will be more bickering between Republicans and Democrats. What Henry would like to see is Romney talk straight to the American people about the manifold challenges facing the country and how he would fix them.

For those challenges are not confined to the unemployment rate. They include the state of the budget and debt, the rising cost of health care, and the unfunded liabilities of Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. They include the Swiss-cheese U.S. tax code, with its wildly uneven and inconstant rates. They include an unpredictable and unaccountable Federal Reserve that has financed U.S. deficits by creating money. And there are other urgent issues—the diminution of American manufacturing, a trade policy that has led U.S. factories to relocate overseas, the degradation of schools and other public institutions, a hollowed-out military, emboldened adversaries. Romney hardly mentions them.

What worries Henry is that the Republicans may not have changed after four years' exile from the White House. He wants plain, even blunt speech that outlines an agenda of national renewal after a trying, even grueling decade. Such an agenda would include no tax increases, but a tax code with fewer special interest loopholes; no Obamacare, but simple fixes that would increase competition, introduce price transparency, and improve portability in the health care marketplace; no more handouts to solar companies, but lifted restrictions on oil and gas drilling and pipelines that would create jobs now. There would be no more avoiding the hole America has dug for herself, but a fresh and serious approach to entitlements that saves these programs for the long haul.

This agenda would be framed not in terms of “free enterprise” or “efficiency” but in the language and tradition of American exceptionalism, middle-class values, common sense, and national strength. These are the things that will move Henry's heart and drive his vote. The alternative is apathy and thus a second Obama term.

After all, whether or not Henry turns out in November, Julia most certainly will.

—Matthew Continetti

Obama's Fantasy World

The White House wants you to know there's much more to Obama's foreign policy than meets the eye. Sure, it might seem that the president has lost the thread, and that America's interests are suffering in the Persian Gulf, the eastern Mediterranean, Europe, and Africa, just to name a few. But there's a secret world—details of which are regularly leaked to the media—where the reality is supposedly different. Here the Obama administration is—according to the Obama administration—conducting a robust foreign policy, racking up victory after victory and confounding our foes on a regular basis. You just don't know about it because Obama wants it that way, nice and quiet. Subtlety, after all, is the signature of smart power.

You might think, for example, that Obama has rolled over on Iran, and that he will allow the mullahs and the Revolutionary Guards Corps to get the bomb. But in the secret world, the president has engineered a clandestine cyber campaign against Iran's nuclear facilities that will continue to frustrate the regime's plans. In the secret world, the administration has intelligence operatives on the ground in Syria coordinating with rebel forces and regional allies to bring down Bashar al-Assad. Russian president Vladimir Putin may seem to display open contempt for Obama—but in the secret world, the Russian reset will soon pay rich dividends.

This secret world, not to put too fine a point on it, is a fantasy. In the real world, there are clandestine actions, to be sure, but the bulk of foreign policy—trade, diplomacy, and war—is conducted openly. Unlike an iceberg, foreign policy is almost all visible. This is especially true of the United States, an enormous power projecting global influence whose smallest movements and offhand remarks are monitored closely by all. Around the world, lives may

depend on a decision made in the White House. When the United States is inert, as it is with the current administration, when it is not doing anything to secure its interests, its inaction is obvious to friends and enemies alike.

The administration's campaign of leaks, in short, is political theater. So what is the driving principle of Obama's foreign policy?

In the White House's hesitancy in acting to topple American adversary, and Iranian ally, Bashar al-Assad, WEEKLY STANDARD contributing editor Reuel Marc Gerecht sees evidence of an "administration trying not to commit itself." Indeed, lack of commitment would appear to describe Obama's foreign policy in its entirety. Ambivalence has been elevated to a guiding principle.

Perhaps the most instructive example is Turkey, whose prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is said to be one of Obama's closest confidants among world leaders. He earned his place on Obama's speed dial because

the administration believed that Islamists were poised to inherit the political order of the Middle East, and that Turkey's Islamist premier would be well placed to help coordinate the White House's outreach—in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya, among other places. It is because the administration saw Ankara as a useful strategic partner that it tried to pressure



Israel to apologize to Turkey for killing nine terrorists aboard the Turkish-flagged *Mavi Marmara*, dispatched in May 2010 to break the maritime blockade of Gaza.

The Turks never received their apology, but Erdogan won a role as the administration's proxy on Syria policy—until Assad illuminated the limits of Ankara's power and Erdogan turned against the Syrian president. Turkish diplomats have sought U.S. support to bring down Assad, while Turkish military planners are said to be explaining to their U.S. peers exactly how they'd do it—if the Americans were only on board. But Turkish efforts to convince the White House to join in a project that would advance U.S. interests have been in vain. Obama won't do it. So the Turks, as well as other regional partners, are spinning their wheels without the backing of their superpower ally.

Much has been made of the Obama team's tough-minded political cutthroats, but they're all deployed against Mitt Romney. When it comes to foreign policy, the White House rolls over. It's not just that Putin and Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei might be a little

rougher around the edges than Chicago political bosses, but that Obama himself is not that hardy. Over the course of a very brief political career, he has always had the wind at his back—thanks in large part to an admiring press corps, which has now also proved to be a willing accomplice in crafting the fairy tale of Obama's secret foreign policy cunning.

The real issue then is this: Why has the administration felt the need to project a world of exciting secret images on the blank screen of his foreign policy? That is, who is the administration defending itself against? Whose criticism are they trying to blunt? Republican opponents, to be sure, as well as the party's candidate—but more significantly the large part of the American public that expects leadership from its commander in chief. Obama's handlers are busy behind the curtains making it look like he is a decisive leader because they fear the judgment that will be rendered on the president if the public sizes him up correctly: a character study in ambivalence, a man who can't commit.

—Lee Smith

A Campaign Altogether Old

A new political science is needed for a world altogether new. But that is what we hardly dream of: placed in the middle of a rapid river, we obstinately fix our eyes on some debris that we still perceive on the bank, while the current takes us away and takes us backward toward the abyss.

—Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*

After the most serious financial crisis of our lifetime, after frantic bank bailouts and a massive government stimulus, after unprecedented deficits and extraordinary quantitative easing, we find ourselves in 2012 in a political-economic world altogether new. We need new policies to respond to our novel situation, policies reflecting fresh thinking based on firm principles. But this is precisely what our current presidential campaigns hardly dream of. And so, finding themselves in the middle of a rapid river, they obstinately fix their eyes on some debris they perceive on the bank, while the current takes all of us away and backward toward the abyss.

We expected no more from Barack Obama. We still hope for better from Mitt Romney. Perhaps Romney will

start to take Matthew Continetti's excellent advice in the editorial above, and decide to "talk straight to the American people about the manifold challenges facing the country and how he would fix them." Perhaps he'll address the worry "that the Republicans may not have changed after four years' exile from the White House." Or perhaps not. If not, we'll just have to hope that candidate Romney knows what he's doing in running a cautious and vague campaign; that he'll win; and that President Romney, once elected, will adopt the bold remedies and imaginative policies the country needs.

Many presidents, after all, have done far more in office than would have been suggested by their campaigns. Franklin Roosevelt ran a reasonably conventional and cautious campaign in 1932. But as president, he transformed our fiscal, monetary, and regulatory policies, and altered fundamentally the size and scope of the federal government.

Could Romney turn out to be a modern-day FDR? Let's hope so. This presidential campaign may not feature big-time ideas, but the next president had better be a big-time reformer. We have banks too big to fail and a welfare state too big to succeed. We have unsustainable public debt and unsustainable behavior by parts of the private sector. We have too much dependency on government and too much disparity in private wealth and power. We lack enforceable rules to constrain government spending and the government's printing of money, and we have far too many regulations that limit freedom and hamper entrepreneurship in seemingly minor but cumulatively crippling ways. We have too much crony capitalism and too little democratic capitalism, too much legalism and too little rule of law.

And yet most of our politicians traffic in slogans rather than judgment, and many of our economic thinkers indulge in the conceit of economics as a pseudoscience rather than engaging in serious thought about political economy. Still, the wisdom of thinkers from Adam Smith to Joseph Schumpeter to Friedrich Hayek, and of statesmen from Alexander Hamilton to Ludwig Erhard to Jacques Rueff, remains available to us. And there are those who draw on those traditions and try to think anew (see, for instance, the articles by Irwin Stelzer and Lewis Lehrman in this issue). Indeed, look around conservative journals and you'll find vigorous discussion of the political economy of democratic capitalism, spirited debate about how to foster economic opportunity and growth, and thoughtful consideration of the challenge of strengthening the institutions of a free society and a self-governing polity.

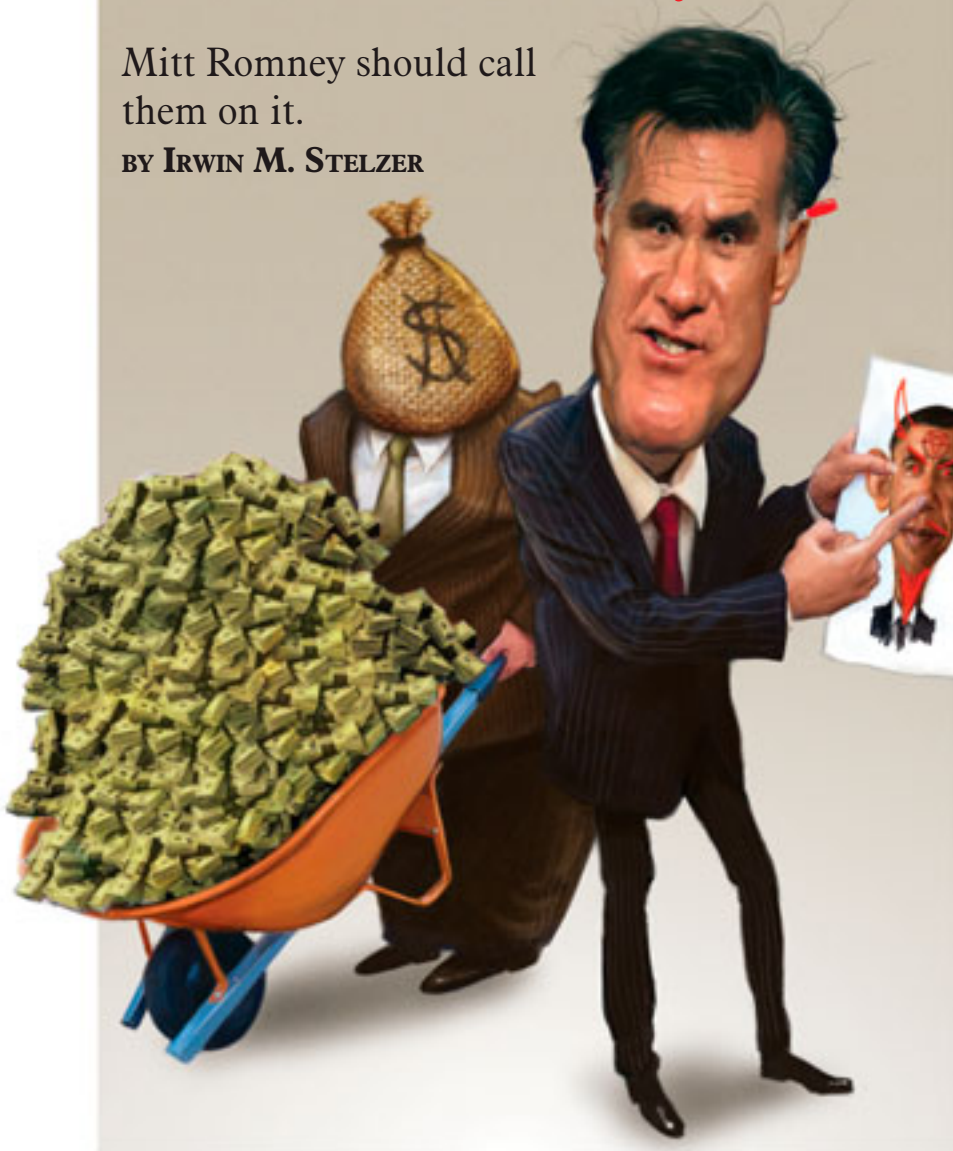
It's true you won't find much of that in the presidential campaign, so far. What you'll find is one candidate asserting he's betting on America, and the other assuring us he believes in America. That leaves it to the rest of us to think about how to improve and strengthen America.

—William Kristol

When Bankers Behave Badly

Mitt Romney should call them on it.

BY IRWIN M. STELZER



Where's the outrage? No, not at President Obama's performance, foreign and domestic, or his airbrushing the past three years of his failed economic

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policies out of the history books. That particular outrage Mitt Romney is taking good care to express as part of his strategy of concentrating on Obama's failures rather than risk proposing policies to return morning to America. But where is the Republican candidate's outrage at some of those who might be considered his own friends and allies?

Just because Obama attacks "fat cat" bankers in one of his egalitarian rants

doesn't mean that Romney should refuse to excoriate those bailed-out, over-bonused executives when their behavior warrants it. Ever since the days of Adam Smith, believers in the virtues of free markets have known that "people of the same trade seldom meet together . . . but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public." It's bad enough when these conspiracies aim to fix prices on, say, construction projects. But when the conspirators are bankers who label themselves "dudes" and "big boys," and promise each other bottles of Bollinger for manipulating prices, and when the price they fix is the interest rate that the *Wall Street Journal*

estimates governs \$800 trillion of loans and derivatives worldwide, including almost one million U.S. home loans indexed to Libor carrying an unpaid principal balance of \$275 billion, we have an assault on the heart of capitalism, not to mention a potential bonanza for class-action lawyers. The CEO of one multinational bank told the *Economist*, "This is the banking industry's tobacco moment," referring to that industry's \$200 billion claims payout.

That's what the bankers' fixing of the so-called Libor (London Inter-Bank Offered Rate) is all about. Don't worry about the details. Know only that the bankers manipulated the global rate to turn a market into what the Bank of England calls a "cess-pit" in order to enhance their profits; that Barclays has agreed to settle for a fine of \$450 million and demanded the resignation of its American-born president, Bob Diamond; and that the British authorities are all over other banks like a tent.

And where is Mitt Romney, with a golden opportunity to show that he is outraged at this latest effort of the banking community to appropriate to itself a still larger share of the national income, to show that he believes in a market manipulated neither by government bureaucrats nor by private bankers? It's not banker-bashing to criticize bankers when they deserve it. And it's not bad politics when that

JASON SELZER

criticism lets Main Street know that Wall Street does not own this candidate. The Manhattan Institute's Nicole Gelinas said it best: "When a bank egregiously breaks the law, it should run the risk of a criminal conviction." Why not a simple comment from the candidate that bankers' "monkeying with the Libor this way for their own financial benefit is outrageous"? Alas, that statement came not from Romney but from Barney Frank, who predictably sees congressional hearings and more regulations as the solution.

Then there is the not-so-small matter of the structure of the financial sector. Romney must know better than anyone that the folks running our big banks, including Obama's favorite banker Jamie Dimon, are hardly paragons of risk assessment. After all, Bain Capital, where Romney made his fortune, existed in part because worthy businesses often could not borrow on attractive terms from traditional banks. He must know two other things about these banks: They are too big to fail, and too complicated to regulate. So where is he when economists say that the better alternative is not more of the failed policies of the Obama years—regulating the unregulatable, bailing out when all else fails—but breaking up the big banks? Not for vulgar populist reasons, but to improve the functioning of the capital markets. If so inclined, he could toss in a fairness argument to top off the economic efficiency point.

But that might be too much to ask of the candidate of a party that sees the need to bail out banks but is squeamish about supporting measures to keep delinquent mortgagees in their homes. Pity. After all, it took both improvident borrowers and imprudent lenders to build up this stock of dicey paper, so why not share the burden of digging out of the problem more evenly? I know—moral hazard, the fear that failing to punish bad behavior by borrowers will produce imitations of that behavior. A legitimate consideration, but not one that tops all others, including the social cost of evictions, borne not only by the evicted family, but by every family on the block, doomed

to see the value of their homes fall as the vacant adjacent house deteriorates under the incompetent maintenance of the foreclosing bank.

Besides, the moral hazard argument applies not only to borrowers, but to bankers, many of whom remain in place and well compensated after seriously damaging their institutions and the larger economy, while others have had soft landings thanks to golden parachutes. The absence of consequences for reckless lenders as severe as those imposed on delinquent borrowers is surely the stuff of which moral hazard is made.

Then there is the matter of consumer protection. Democrats seem to have a monopoly on wanting to save consumers from the big businesses with which they often partner. Why does Romney not agree with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) that mortgages should be made more understandable to the borrower? After all, good conservatives should favor programs to eliminate "information asymmetry"—a situation in which one party, in this case the lender, knows a lot more about the costs and risks inherent in a transaction than does the other party. He could at the same time take a swipe at the administration's preference for regulation, in this case the CFPB's 1,099-page proposed regulation to mandate a three-page mortgage-disclosure.

Instead of such complicated regulations, a gift to the class-action lawyers who contribute so generously to Democratic campaigns, Romney can propose a simple rule requiring lenders to keep skin in the game so that they have an incentive to lend only to borrowers with a reasonable prospect of repaying their loans. And elimination of the multiple barriers to entry in the real estate, mortgage brokering, and related businesses. Incentives and competition trump regulation in serving the national interest every time.

And a good conservative, which Romney claims to be, certainly should feel comfortable railing against charges and fees that are obscured to the point of invisibility and enacted retroactively. That's not how well-functioning

competitive markets work. Instead of more regulation, Romney can propose eliminating barriers that make it difficult for large retailers to enter the credit card and other banking businesses. The fact that Elizabeth Warren, the creator of the CFPB, is on the warpath against bankers is enough, of course, to make one want to oppose all the bureau's doings. But that is an urge that can be overcome in the interests of championing borrowers in an imperfect market.

Finally, where is Romney every time the Fed cranks up the printing presses, or depresses interest rates first by one means and then another? Surely he knows that the hyperactivity of the Fed is due to the failure of the Obama fiscal policies, threatens future inflation, and cheats savers in order to benefit borrowers. Millions of retired folks are watching their pensions and modest savings shrink in the face of the Fed's low interest rate policy, one that has failed to persuade America's corporations to use their \$1.7 trillion cash pile to build factories and hire workers, as Carnegie Mellon University professor Allan Meltzer so clearly pointed out in the *Wall Street Journal* last week.

There's more, but you get the idea. There is solid conservative ground on which Mitt Romney can stand that would enable him to promise to lance the festering sore that has come to be called crony capitalism—deals between big business and big government to shield big business from competition and help big government get even bigger, all the while distorting capital markets. Indeed, there are instances when good conservative economics just happens—well, not just happens, but inevitably proves—to coincide with politically popular causes.

As University of Chicago professor Luigi Zingales puts it, "Democrats have promoted crony capitalism to foster their liberal agenda. They are pro-business—at least certain businesses—but fundamentally anti-market. This is exactly the opposite of what most Americans want. . . . A pro-market, but not pro-big-business, platform would be a winner for Republicans."

For big business, a new regulation

means hiring a few more lawyers; for small businesses, it means trying to hurdle still another barrier to entry. Take the case of Barclays, the leading Libor rate-fixer (so far as we know). Britain's bank regulator complains that Barclays always leads the charge for more regulation: "Barclays has a tendency continually to seek advantage from complex structures or favorable regulatory interpretations." Pharmaceutical companies promised support for Obamacare in return for provisions that protect them from competition from reimported drugs and generics. Insurance companies accepted costly provisions of Obamacare in return for regulations that allow them to roll those costs into the expenses they will be permitted to recoup in rates and, more important, penalties (oops, sorry Chief, taxes) that deliver to them millions of unwilling, healthy new customers. Big banks are allowed to shelter under Fed regulations when the going gets tough in return for muting their opposition to regulations that will do more to hurt their small competitors than prevent them from going about their business in the good, old fashioned way. Campaign contributors are allowed to short-circuit capital markets and obtain subsidies for their uneconomic green enterprises, sopping up capital that markets would surely allocate to more promising ventures.

What Obama has on offer is not the entrepreneur-driven market capitalism that conservatives have always favored. What Obama offers is a crony capitalism that Mitt Romney is particularly well suited to attack, using his knowledge of how capitalism should work. And what Mitt Romney can offer is a conservative willing to make the tough, and dare I say it, fair and radical decisions that will get capitalism performing as it once did: creating huge amounts of material wealth, and distributing it not to presidential cronies, or the companies with the biggest lobbying budgets, but to those who create wealth with their capital, risk-taking, and hard labor. That's the "right track" that two-thirds of Americans believe the current engineer-in-chief has veered off. ♦

Party of One

Meet Michigan's Justin Amash.

BY MICHAEL WARREN

After contacting the congressional office of Justin Amash and expressing my interest in interviewing the 31-year-old libertarian Republican from Michigan, I received a terse reply via email from his press secretary.

"Hi, Michael," the email read. "Thanks for your patience. This won't work for Rep. Amash right now."

This, I'm told, is a common response. Amash (rhymes with "awash") doesn't give many interviews. Most of the time, inquiring journalists are directed to the freshman member's Facebook page, where they can find his educational history (University of Michigan, A.B. 2002, J.D. 2005), his religious views (Christian), and his extensive résumé (see the "About Me" screenshot opposite).

Amash writes and edits the page himself, often from the House floor on his iPad. That level of openness and transparency may help explain his impressive number of Facebook fans: over 32,000 and rising. He posts everything from photos of his inflight reading (recently, *Hayek on Hayek*, a volume from the collected works of Austrian economist Friedrich Hayek) to videos of his speeches on the floor of the House. He updates seven days a week, at all hours of the day and night.

But Amash mostly uses his Facebook page to chronicle his work for the people of his district. He writes and publishes an explanation for nearly every vote he takes, which is

a lot of explaining, since he hasn't missed a vote since entering Congress.

At 11:11 A.M. on June 2, for example, Amash wrote that he voted for an amendment, authored by Jeff Duncan of South Carolina, to H.R. 4310. The amendment, he wrote, "bars funds for implementation of the Law of the Sea treaty. Among other things, the

treaty includes a tax and redistribution scheme that covers resources in the continental shelf. It passed 229-193." At 11:13, Lynette Largent commented, "Yesss! Whoot!" A few minutes later, Joseph Benning wrote, "Yeah! This diabolical LOST is a genuine threat to our sovereignty." Amash's post received 119 "likes" and

19 comments, all laudatory.

The commenters aren't just constituents from Amash's Grand Rapids-area district—their profiles show them to be as far-flung as Georgia and Alaska. The district was once represented by Gerald Ford and usually elects Republicans. Amash's immediate predecessor was Vern Ehlers, a research physicist who retired in 2010 after 18 years in the House and had a reputation for moderate, inoffensive Republicanism and competent constituent service. Grand Rapidsians aren't used to being represented by fierce ideologues. But if Republicans in the district are at all unhappy with having a libertarian loner in Congress, they haven't shown it; Amash was unopposed in this year's GOP primary.

What is clear is that the majority of Amash's Facebook interlocutors share his interest in Austrian economics, libertarian philosophy, and the



Justin Amash

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NEWS.COM

politics of Ron Paul. In fact, Amash may be more the true heir to the elder Paul's libertarian throne than his son Rand Paul, the Kentucky senator (and Romney endorser).

Like the veteran member from Texas, Amash has voted against the Republican caucus on more than 80 bills. He often votes against small, noncontroversial spending bills: federal assistance to state and local police forces, research funds for cybersecurity, additional appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs. A member of the House Budget Committee, Amash supported the Paul Ryan-authored budget in 2011 but voted against the nearly identical budget in 2012, saying that while it was, "in most respects, better than last year's," the 2012 cuts weren't deep enough, particularly in the area of military spending and foreign aid.

An ardent civil libertarian as well as a fiscal one, Amash doesn't just oppose this year's National Defense Authorization Act—he coauthored an amendment with liberal Democrat Adam Smith of Washington that would have ended the military's practice of detaining American citizens accused of terrorism. (The Amash-Smith amendment failed.) And Amash alone among Republicans joined eight very liberal Democrats in opposing a House resolution reaffirming the nation's motto as "In God We Trust."

House Republicans call him the "black sheep" of the conference, and Amash does seem to have an unscratchable itch to buck his own party. Take a recent bill designed to restore the flow of water to California's Central Valley. A court ruling in 2009 halted the flow under the Endangered Species Act—the irrigation system supposedly harmed a species of smelt. Ten moderate Democrats joined 236 Republicans to give the drought-ridden Central Valley access to its water supply, with Amash the only Republican opposed. There's no explanation for this vote on his Facebook page.

"He is a well-intentioned guy with very different goals than most people up here," said one House

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Justin Amash About

About

The official Facebook Page of U.S. Rep. Justin Amash, Michigan's Third District | <http://amash.house.gov/> <http://twitter.com/repjustinamash>

About Me

Business lawyer and small business owner; member, St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church, State Bar of Michigan, Grand Rapids Bar Association, Right to Life of Michigan, National Rifle Association, The Economic Club of Grand Rapids, Kent County Republican Executive Committee, East Kent County Republicans, Republican Liberty Caucus, Alumni Association of the University of Michigan, American Legislative Exchange Council Civil Justice Task Force (2009–2010); commissioner, Uniform Law Commission (2009–2010); House Republican liaison, State Bar of Michigan Task Force on the Future of Michigan's Courts (2009–2010); chair, Liberty Caucus (Michigan House of Representatives) (2009–2010); chair, House Liberty Caucus; elected Republican precinct delegate, 2008; elected to the Michigan House of Representatives, 2008; elected to the United States House of Representatives, 2010

U.S. House Committees (2011–2012):
Budget; Oversight and Government Reform; Joint Economic

State House Committees (2009–2010):
Labor (Minority Vice Chair); Education; Judiciary; Military and Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security

Republican aide. "He's not interested in governing."

Or even in engaging with his House colleagues. When I asked fellow freshman Republican Renee Ellmers of North Carolina about Amash, she laughed nervously. "He doesn't play nice with others," said Ellmers, a Tea Party conservative popular with the House leadership. "The thing is, he is a member who represents his constituency, and he has a"—she paused to think—"a different perspective."

For the Republican establishment, Amash may be more an amusing spectacle than a serious threat. After the first ask, the GOP leadership doesn't bother whipping Amash on votes. Committee chairs have learned he's not likely to budge and usually don't try to negotiate with him. No congressman is an island, but Amash comes close.

A few days after his office rejected my interview request, I happened to spot Amash walking by himself on Pennsylvania Avenue, across the street from the Capitol.

"Congressman," I said, introducing myself. He looked startled and confused, as if most passersby in D.C. assume he's a midlevel congressional staffer. I told him about my fruitless efforts to snag an interview with him.

"Well, um," he said, "it's been a crazy week." He referred me back to his office and walked away without saying much else. Probably off to do important things congressmen do, I figured.

Later that afternoon, though, there was only one new update on Amash's Facebook page—a brief birthday message for French libertarian economist Frédéric Bastiat. According to Facebook, "511 people like this." ♦

The GOP's Big Tent

Opposition to Obamacare unites Republicans.

BY JOHN MCCORMACK

When the Supreme Court ruled 5-4 on June 28 to let Obamacare stand, President Obama said that “it’s time for us to move forward.” Harry Reid implored his colleagues and countrymen to “move on to other things,” and Nancy Pelosi said that “for the American people, yes, the fight is over.”

It’s no surprise that Democrats would want to move on from an issue that caused 63 of their House seats and 7 of their Senate seats to flip to the Republicans in 2010. The last time Republicans took control of the House of Representatives from Democrats was 1994, the year when, after 40 straight years of control of the House, Democrats unsuccessfully tried to pass a national health care bill. You may detect a pattern.

So it was a little puzzling to see an anonymous “veteran Republican campaign consultant” tell the *New York Times* before the House voted to repeal Obamacare on July 11 that Republicans would be wise to take the president’s advice and move on from the issue. “Any time Republicans are debating taxes and the economy, we’re winning,” said the GOP consultant. “Any time we’re debating health care, they’re winning.”

To the contrary, Obamacare is still the most toxic issue for Democrats in 2012. Polling shows that likely voters strongly favor repeal. A *Newsweek* poll taken after the Supreme Court ruling showed only 37 percent of likely voters approved of Obama’s handling of health care while 58 percent disapproved. Obama’s handling of the

economy was viewed more favorably—47 percent approved while 49 percent disapproved.

Obamacare not only causes voters to worry about losing their health insurance or seeing premiums skyrocket, it unites center-right voters who care about a wide range of issues. The law alienates the anti-taxers and



Protests at the Supreme Court in March

the budget hawks, religious conservatives and social moderates, the elderly who face Medicare rationing and the young who are mandated to buy expensive insurance they do not need. Opposition to Obamacare is what holds up the GOP’s big tent.

In the wake of Chief Justice John Roberts’s jesuitical ruling that Obamacare is a constitutional tax, rather than an unconstitutional mandate, the political debate narrowly focused on whether Obamacare is in fact “a tax.” After his campaign stumbled for a few days over the issue, Mitt Romney said, “Well, the Supreme Court has the final word. And their final word is that Obamacare is a tax. So it’s a tax.”

But Obamacare is not just “a tax”—it’s a hodgepodge of 21 taxes, according to Americans for Tax Reform, on everything from investment income and tanning salons to medical devices, over-the-counter medications, and “Cadillac” health insurance plans.

Even though it will hit only the small number of Americans who don’t purchase health insurance, the individual mandate is one of the least popular parts of the bill. But in an economy with 8.2 percent unemployment, Obamacare’s employer mandate may be far worse than the individual mandate. The law imposes a \$2,000- to \$3,000-per-job tax on businesses that employ 50 or more people but do not provide health insurance. For employers who currently provide health coverage, Obamacare threatens to drive up the cost of insurance, leading to lower wages and fewer jobs. “I won’t add [jobs] back until I know. The cost of employment includes health care,” Ray Van Ness, a small business owner in Shreveport, Louisiana, told the *Shreveport Times* in June. “I really won’t know the full weight until it unfolds over the next couple of years.”

Republicans are eager to fight Obama on his plans to raise income taxes on those earning more than \$250,000 (including businesses that file as individuals). But they would seem to be on more solid ground running against the tax hikes Obama has already passed that need to be repealed rather than ones he is proposing that will likely never take effect.

Then there’s Obamacare’s eye-popping price tag. According to the Congressional Budget Office, during the first decade when it’s in full effect (2014 to 2023), Obamacare will cost about \$2 trillion. That’s a lot of money. A decade of Obamacare will cost five times more than the Medicare prescription-drug benefit or two-and-a-half times the financial cost of the Iraq war. A decade of Obamacare will cost four times Greece’s total public debt.

And the \$2 trillion estimate is likely much too low. Because of the Supreme Court’s ruling that the federal government can’t deny states all Medicaid funds if they refuse to expand

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AP / KRISTOFFER TRIPPLAAR / SIPA USA

Medicaid, “up to 17 million people will go on Obamacare instead of Medicaid,” says House Budget Committee chairman Paul Ryan. “We haven’t begun to quantify the cost-explosion that’s going to happen.”

Supporters of Obamacare claim it will raise enough taxes and cut enough spending not to add much to the deficit. That’s doubtful. But with federal bureaucrats in charge of cutting hundreds of billions from Medicare to pay for Obamacare, heavy-duty rationing of health care is always a possibility. That would, if anything, make the law even more unpopular than it already is.

As important as the high cost was in turning the public against Obamacare in 2009, social issues may have played a bigger role. The bill didn’t almost die in an overwhelmingly Democratic Congress because it spent or taxed too much. Obamacare was nearly sunk because it allows taxpayer money to be used to purchase health insurance policies that cover abortion on demand.

Some pro-life Democrats eventually

caved and voted for Obamacare in exchange for an executive order that didn’t even pretend to solve their primary problem with the bill. Now the Obama administration has mandated that private insurance plans, including those of religious institutions, must cover, at no cost to the recipient, abortion-inducing drugs, as well as contraception and sterilization procedures. Polls show a divided electorate on the “contraception mandate,” but 60 to 70 percent of voters oppose public funding of abortion.

The abortion issue is a big reason running against Obamacare may be better for Mitt Romney than “the economy” in general. The view from the top of the Romney campaign is that pro-lifers are going to vote for them no matter what, so it should focus on swing voters who are primarily motivated by the economy and jobs. Activists may vote for Romney no matter what, but there are indeed swing voters who are conservative on social issues though not on fiscal issues.

The Pew Research Center calls these voters “Disaffecteds.” They are lower income, distrustful of corporations, want government to spend more on the poor, and don’t want to see changes to Medicare or Social Security. They are also socially conservative, religious, and distrustful of government. Disaffecteds voted for John McCain over Barack Obama by a 16-point margin in 2008, but voted for Republicans over Democrats by a 38-point margin in 2010. Running against Obamacare could help keep these Disaffecteds in the Republican fold in 2012.

The good news for foes of the law is that most of its provisions—most of the taxes, spending, regulations, and abortion-funding—don’t kick in until after the election. But therein lies the challenge for Republicans rebutting Democratic pleas to “move on.” Voters won’t immediately feel or see the negative effects of the law before November. They will need to be reminded of the many reasons to stop Obamacare before it’s too late. ♦

Health Care Law Remains Fundamentally Flawed

By Thomas J. Donohue

President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

By now, most Americans know that the Supreme Court upheld the bulk of President Obama’s health care reform law. But many are left wondering, *what’s next?*

Regardless of the ruling, everyone knows that we haven’t begun to deal with many of our health care challenges and that the reform law won’t get the job done. We haven’t addressed the imperative of prudently reforming the Medicare and Medicaid entitlements. We haven’t figured out how to extend access to quality care for every American. And we haven’t come to terms with how we’re going to handle the coming wave of 77 million baby boomers at or nearing retirement age.

We do know that the law is not living up to the promises made by the president and supporters of the legislation. Health care costs are rising, not falling, for the federal government, employers, and families.

A new Senate report projects that the law will cost \$2.6 trillion by 2023—a massive increase over the \$900 billion the president initially promised. Private employer health care costs also continue to rise, some of which will be passed on to employees. Some employers will have no choice but to stop offering coverage altogether. Costs are rising for Americans too. The average family has seen a sharp spike in premiums due in large part to health reform.

The law also broke the fundamental promise that Americans can keep their health care coverage if they like it. According to the Congressional Budget Office, in 2016, 4 million Americans will lose their employer-based health insurance.

Bottom line: The law fails to implement sensible solutions to control costs, improve quality, and increase coverage. We can’t afford to settle for “reform” that doesn’t accomplish those fundamental goals.

Achieving meaningful health reform will be hard—but not impossible. We can drive down costs by implementing private

sector solutions that improve competition.

Consumers should be allowed to choose the coverage they want, and providers should be paid based on the quality of care—not merely the quantity of services rendered. Medical liability reform that curbs the need for providers to practice defensive medicine would also drive down costs. And widespread adoption of health information technology—including electronic prescriptions and medical records—could further improve quality, lower costs, and reduce medical errors.

Far from putting an end to the debate, the Supreme Court ruling has only reaffirmed our commitment to get health reform right. The Chamber will work as hard as ever toward a comprehensive solution that improves quality, expands coverage, and reduces costs.



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U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Romneyconomics

Good but incomplete.

BY LEWIS E. LEHRMAN

Mitt Romney has articulated the choice we will make in November. We can choose President Obama and a European future—i.e., high unemployment, demographic winter, big government commanding over 50 percent of future output, a welfare state engineered and manipulated by the Washington bureaucracy, the end of American leadership, and, ultimately, national insolvency. Or we can embark once again on the road to rapid economic expansion, through pro-growth tax reform, smaller government, a balanced budget, and sound money. What we need, Romney argues, is an entrepreneurial economy based on the free price mechanism, free markets, free and fair international trade. For Romney the goal of rapid economic growth is full employment, a strong national defense, and a rising American standard of living. These policies are necessary. But are they sufficient?

Romney's analysis emphasizes the character of presidential leadership, the need for hands-on White House direction of national economic policy. Workable economic policies require not only the right goals but also a strong president capable of leading Congress and the nation in a new direction—away from Obama's backward-looking statism, and forward to pro-growth tax policies, budgetary equilibrium, and sound monetary policies. Regulations must be radically simplified. The tax code must be comprehensively reformed—with a larger base, fewer loopholes, and lower rates.

In his 2010 book *Seeds of Destruction*, Glenn Hubbard, a top economic adviser to Romney, summarizes the entrepreneurial spirit underlying

Romney's approach. "First and foremost, it will mean putting unemployed Americans back to work. Second, it will mean stabilizing the housing market and housing prices. Third, it will mean increasing the productivity of the American worker and making U.S. industry more competitive in international markets so that wage and economic growth can once again boost purchasing power. Fourth, it will mean reducing America's depen-



The key to avoiding a European future

dence on increasingly expensive oil. Finally, it will mean creating a strong and stable dollar so that our import bill remains manageable."

On this last point, Romney has criticized the Greenspan-Bernanke Fed—the ultimate cause of the stock market bubble of the 1990s and the subsequent crash and recession (2000-2002); the ultimate cause also of the real estate bubble, its collapse, and the Great Recession (2007-2009). Romney argues in almost every economic speech that Obama's stimulus policies are poorly planned and ineffective, and that Obama has been AWOL on major legislation, defaulting to a pork barrel Democratic

congressional majority on economic and health care policy in 2009-2010, when he had a majority in both the Senate and the House.

In private and public comments, Romney and Hubbard have suggested that hyper-expansive Fed policy and quantitative easing—repressing interest rates to zero—is a reckless monetary approach that in the past has led to bouts of inflation, followed by deflation and recession.

I embrace much of this analysis and many of Romney's proposals. His program is necessary, but it may not be sufficient.

Romney often cites GDP numbers. In the textbook equation, gross domestic product equals consumption plus government spending plus business investment plus (or minus) net exports. Citing GDP numbers implies this is the best way to measure national wealth and prosperity. But if net exports are negative and business investment is declining, while government spending and consumption are growing very rapidly, nominal GDP can still be positive, even as national wealth is declining. The GDP equation is one-dimensional accounting; it omits the balance sheet—assets minus liabilities—which tracks the true increase or decrease in the wealth of nations, firms, and families. Recall that GDP was growing in 2007, but because of exponential increases of debt fueled by the Fed, the bubble and net national wealth were about to collapse.

As an analogy, consider an American car company (pre-2007). Its sales (or top-line income) may have been going up, but its real profits were declining. The car company continued to build new factories, hired more people, created new dealers. But its net worth had been running down for years—heading toward zero. Ultimately, bankruptcy or a bailout had to be the result.

How did the car company show rising top-line income, or sales (analogous to GDP), while its wealth was collapsing? The answer is by borrowing from banks and bondholders everywhere and whenever it could, at home and abroad—mortgaging

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its assets and dissipating the wealth accumulated for generations—until, finally, it became insolvent. This is the European path now followed by the Obama government and several of our state governments. There is a better path, as Governor Scott Walker of Wisconsin has shown.

The United States stored up immense human and financial capital for centuries. But that wealth has now been substantially mortgaged to the Fed and foreign monetary authorities, commercial banks, government trust funds, domestic institutions, and increasingly to foreign lenders. Still more ominous, private national wealth, owned by American taxpayers, has been indirectly pledged as collateral for U.S. government debt and its enormous unfunded liabilities—among others, Medicare, Medicaid, and government pensions. Unless there is a dramatic change in U.S. economic policy, national insolvency will ultimately overtake us. It is difficult to predict when. But in the long run, what cannot be sustained will not be sustained. European insolvency is the witness to this truth.

Romney and his advisers must analyze the true state of our national balance sheet in addition to our problematic national income accounts. They should offer a National Balance Sheet to the public, in accessible language. It will show America's dire and deteriorating position as a massive debtor, largely propped up by the exorbitant privilege of the dollar's role as a global reserve currency. Despite a solvent private sector, U.S. government budget deficits and balance of payments deficits, financed by the Fed and foreigners, increasingly compromise the American balance sheet.

Romney's tax reform is pro-growth, but it tends to emphasize tax rate reductions for property income. It would be useful to emphasize that a pro-growth tax reform should not favor property income (e.g., capital gains and dividends) over labor income (wages and salaries). Cutting rates for both was the key to the bipartisan Reagan tax reform. The Reagan

reform was also good politics. The vast majority of Americans, after all, are salary and wage earners.

Romney speaks clearly, even passionately, on monetary policy, sometimes indicting the hyperactive credit creation (or money printing) of the Greenspan-Bernanke Fed. He has recommended a rule-based monetary policy in place of the present unrestrained, discretionary (indeed, arbitrary) Fed policy.

The question is—which rule? The Taylor rule? Nominal GDP targeting? Inflation targeting? Money stock targeting? Men in the mold of Paul Volcker would help, Romney suggests. But this is a recommendation for different people instead of rule-based institutional reform of the Federal Reserve.

As Allan Meltzer's magisterial two-volume history of the Fed shows, the 100-year legacy of the Federal Reserve System is a cycle of boom and bust, substantially caused by erratic Fed monetary policy—e.g., the 1920s boom, followed by financial collapse and the Great Depression; the 1990s stock market boom, crash, and recession; the real estate boom, financial collapse, and the Great Recession (2007-2009). These examples characterize the Fed's century-long, unstable reign over the dollar and manipulation of the money supply. Worse yet, under the Fed's arbitrary policies, the purchasing power of the dollar has declined 85 percent since 1971, when President Nixon terminated the last weak link of the dollar to gold. The depreciation of the value of the dollar has gradually impoverished those on fixed incomes and those on lagging wages and salaries. It is fair to say the Federal Reserve has presided over an age of inflation.

To carry out true monetary reform, Romney might consider other periods of American monetary history, instead of suggesting the uncertain device of more prudent Fed chairmen, or an easily manipulated Taylor rule, or an even more easily manipulated "inflation targeting rule" or nominal GDP rule.

In 1987, Romney's economic

adviser Glenn Hubbard, in a scholarly analysis of the classical gold standard (1879-1914), reviewed the performance of a period when the dollar was defined as a weight unit of gold; a period when the paper dollar was by law convertible to gold; a period when the dollar was neither an official reserve currency nor a floating monetary token in a turbulent sea of floating exchange rates. That period achieved an economic growth record the equal of any in American history. In stark contrast to the period 1971-2012, the purchasing power of the gold-backed dollar was almost exactly the same in 1914 as it was in 1879. The general price level wound up in 1914 the same as in 1879. There were variations in the price level from year to year, but over the full period, there was neither inflation nor deflation. During this period, the monetary standard of the United States—the dollar defined in law as a weight of gold—performed its constitutional role as a stable means of exchange, a stable unit of account, and a stable store of value.

According to its founding legislation—led by the experienced gold Democrat Carter Glass—the Federal Reserve Act of 1913 was designed to reinforce the existing gold standard. The Federal Reserve System was not designed to manipulate a floating paper dollar and, at its discretion, print money to subsidize the banking cartel and the budget deficit.

So, which rule should it be for monetary policy? The proven, impartial, constitutional, rule-based monetary system is the rule of dollar convertibility to gold—that is, a dollar defined in law as a weight unit of gold. No one knows better than the very practical Governor Romney that past monetary policy, tax policy, and national income accounting—and their consequences—must be studied in the only real and practical laboratory available, the economic history of American business.

Such a study shows the true (or classical) gold standard to be the least imperfect monetary system in American history. ♦

Creeps on My Website

The dark side of search engines.

BY YING MA

It was April 2011, and my book had just been published. *Chinese Girl in the Ghetto* is a memoir of my family's journey from post-Mao China to inner-city America. The story celebrates freedom and individual responsibility, but it also describes the drug- and crime-plagued Oakland, California, of the 1980s that became our home, and it reports the discrimination that we, like many immigrants, encountered from other minorities.

I was prepared to get some hate mail. What I did not expect were the advertising links that Amazon.com displayed alongside my book. They read:

Girls in China—100s of Girls in China

Meet Chinese Girl—Feel lonely? Seek a Loyal Chinese Girl to Warm Up Your Soul.

Looking for a Filipina?

Free Stock Photos—Create a Free Account and Download Asian Teen Images for Free

When I first saw these, I winced. Then I realized that the words “Chinese Girl” must have caused Amazon's ad technology to identify my book as a product that might appeal to people who also had a crass interest in Asian women.

I called Amazon. There, I was quickly disabused of any idea that my complaint could be easily resolved. I spoke to a series of customer representatives, each of whom noted my request and passed it on to the next level. The several women I spoke with were as appalled as I was about

the situation. The men, on the other hand, weren't particularly scandalized. “I'm not sure if these links in fact violate our advertising guidelines,” one said to me.

Finally, a senior technical program manager from the subsidiary responsible for ad links got back to me. He was very nice and professional, apologized profusely for my troubles, and explained that Amazon rarely encounters problems like mine. He also promised to stop displaying ads altogether on my page—in about a month. I'd have to wait that long, he said, because of company procedures, available resources, and concerns about relationships with longtime advertisers. All of it sounded genuine.

Still, I thought—a *month*? For four more weeks, by no fault of my own, my book would be publicly associated with online trafficking in vulgar fantasies. Isn't Amazon a Fortune 500 company on the cutting edge of e-commerce? Shouldn't it be able to flip a switch and stop my book from being used to flog Asian teens?

So I asked that the ads be removed immediately. When after about a week nothing had happened, I wrote angry emails to my contact at Amazon and suggested that I might be able to help the company attract some negative publicity. He was sympathetic, and the company stopped displaying the offensive ads.

I harbor no hard feelings toward Amazon. In fact, most days, I am a loyal and satisfied customer. What troubled me was that the technology could be so obtuse. No thinking salesperson would ever have associated my book with the ads that ran on its Amazon page.

“People can think, and computers can count,” Eric Schmidt, the executive chairman of Google, once said. And Eric Schmidt would know. Google has actually subjected me to closer encounters with porn-seekers than Amazon ever did. And unlike Amazon, Google has not stopped.

In fact, thanks to Google's search algorithm, people looking for Chinese, black, or Chinese-black pornography regularly end up on my personal website.

It all began in October 2009 when someone posted on YouTube a video that showed a Chinese woman beating up a black woman who had tried to bully her on a San Francisco bus. By early 2010, the video had been viewed nearly a million times.

Many viewers, however, were left wondering what had prompted the fight. The Chinese woman spoke no English but kept repeating two phrases to the black woman: “F—you” and “You are stupid.” Meanwhile, she was saying a great deal more in Chinese to her fellow Chinese passengers. So I translated all that and posted the first comprehensive transcript on my website. For about a week, the pageviews shot through the roof.

Then the porn-seekers started arriving. Mostly, they find me by entering into their search engine “black,” “Chinese,” “woman,” and the requisite four-letter word. Google spits out results that include a link to my post and, from there, my website. The process is driven by algorithm, not intelligence. The result for me can best be stated as *Eeeeeeeeeeeew*.

So I've been thinking: I want a smarter, more discerning Internet and better ad display technology. My book and my policy writing both laud the virtues of the free market, and I expect the market to deliver for me. I don't ask that the Internet be purged of porn. I just want the porn-seekers to stay far, far away from my book and website. Until that happy day, I try to take comfort in the fact that those who do crash my website must be sorely disappointed. ♦

Ying Ma's website is yingma.org.

Man with a Plan

*How Paul Ryan became the intellectual leader
of the Republican party*

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

Kenosha, Wisc.

Paul Ryan has come to Kenosha to deliver bad news. It's May 3, 2012, and the United States faces an imminent debt crisis. The federal government is spending too much. Entitlements are out of control. Social Security is going insolvent. Medicare is sucking up an ever-increasing chunk of our tax dollars. There are too many retirees and too few workers to support them. And both political parties are responsible for the unholy mess.

Ryan, the seven-term representative from Wisconsin's 1st Congressional District, speaks quickly, as if the coming collapse might happen in the middle of his remarks if he takes too much time. It's a bracing message. He is saying, in effect, that the American experiment, our 236 extraordinary years of self-government, is on the verge of failure.

And yet Ryan is smiling. It's not the phony grin of a politician seeking votes, or the half-smirk of a charlatan putting one over on a group of rubes. It's a real smile—the eager smile of someone excited to share important news. Paul Ryan believes he has the solution to these problems. And after a long and often lonely fight to convince his fellow Republicans that they should be talking about these issues, Ryan is succeeding.

The town hall in Kenosha is Ryan's third public meeting of the day. He begins his comments by urging those in the crowd to treat each other with respect in order to facilitate a good conversation based on an exchange of ideas. As he says this, supporters of Rob Zerban, the Democrat who will lose to Ryan in November, hold up bumper stickers in front of their faces and begin talking loudly amongst themselves. When a security guard asks them to stop, several of them, led by a woman who looked to be in her 50s, affix the bumper stickers to their foreheads, an act of defiance that they evidently find quite hilarious.

Members of the group—perhaps 20 people out of an audience of some 250 constituents—loudly snicker and sneer throughout Ryan's meeting in what appears to be an

effort to unnerve him. So there is much harrumphing when Ryan touts his entitlement reforms, heavy sighing when he laments the refusal of Senate Democrats to offer a budget of their own, and later shouting as he tries to answer questions.

Ryan's opening remarks take 19 minutes. As if to confirm his well-deserved reputation as a budget wonk, his PowerPoint presentation—yes, a PowerPoint—includes a dizzying array of charts and graphs with debt-to-GDP ratios, revenue estimates, spending analyses, CBO projections, and a fair number of acronyms.

For years, this was the rap on Ryan. He talks in wonk-speak, the peculiar Washington dialect of budget mavens and Capitol Hillians who focus on fiscal policy, and his attempts to communicate the seriousness of our situation were compromised by his affinity for budget jargon.

This is no longer true. Ryan's presentation is compelling and easy to understand. He begins with a description of the coming debt crisis, briefly describes Barack Obama's failure to address it, and then moves quickly to the five principles of his budget proposal. He's given this talk hundreds of times before—to town halls, business groups, small gatherings of congressional Republicans. The practice shows. At one point, Ryan pauses for effect before he clicks to a slide depicting the "current path" projection over a graph tracing the history of U.S. debt. When he finally unveils the red Everest-like mountain of coming debt the audience responds with a collective gasp.

His criticism of the White House is matter-of-fact, almost muted, his tone one of disappointment, not anger. The exception comes when Ryan shares the comment Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner made in testimony before Ryan's committee earlier this spring: "You're right to say we're not coming before you today to say we have a definitive solution to that long-term problem. What we do know is we don't like yours." Ryan was angry at Geithner's indifference to solving such serious problems and indignant at his flippant dismissal of Ryan's work. Those feelings may have subsided, but they haven't gone away. "People said things like that to me all the time in high school," Ryan says to the crowd. It's probably the toughest shot he'll take at the administration all day.

Ryan's efforts to keep things civil are not reciprocated.

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As he takes questions from the crowd, his opponents get louder. Finally, perhaps in an effort to mollify the Zerban supporters, Ryan calls on one of them. After a brief speech about the value of wind as an energy source and its benefits in Europe, she asks why state legislators aren't doing more to produce wind. "Why aren't we in Wisconsin getting on the bandwagon in this instead of blocking it?" Ryan temporarily resists the temptation to embarrass her, choosing instead to point out that there are federal incentives for alternative energy. "There is a wind production tax credit in the law, and it's the only way to make it actually economically viable," he begins, before the questioner shouts back at him.

"I understand—I'm talking about Wisconsin! How about in Wisconsin?!"

"I'm your federal representative. I don't know what to tell you about your state government rules."

A man from the anti-Ryan group tries to help her. "You're the state representative!" he shouts over Ryan's answer.

Ryan remains calm. "I'm not your state representative. I'm your federal representative." He ticks off a list of the state representatives and state senators who represent people in his district. The crowd isn't having it.

"You represent us in Washington, and this is about jobs!!" the original questioner shouts, to applause from her friends.

Ryan tries again to satisfy them. "There is a federal policy for wind turbine production," he begins.

"Not as big as the tax cuts for oil!!!" another woman shouts.

The longer the session continues, the more aggressive Ryan's opponents become. Inevitably, Ryan supporters begin to shout back at them on his behalf. Ryan admonishes both groups. "People, it doesn't make sense to start yelling at each other," he says. And moments later: "It doesn't work if you yell at each other. It's just not polite." On four separate occasions, Ryan calls for civility, but he knows better than to expect it.

"They will organize protests, talking points—sometimes they try to shout you down and get dragged out by the police. That's their goal—to get pulled out, to disrupt," he says later, sitting in the back seat of a large black SUV lumbering across south-central Wisconsin five days before the Democratic gubernatorial recall primary. "Wherever there's one of us—Scott Walker, Sean Duffy, Jim Sensenbrenner, [state

representative] Robin Vos—doing something, they go and find it and protest and picket us. So it's all about agitating, polarizing—sort of Alinsky stuff—conservatives and Republicans, because of these recalls, because of the presidential."

The spate of recall elections in Wisconsin is now over. "The presidential" is upon us, and Paul Ryan is very much at the center of the debate that will consume a large part of the country for the next 16 weeks.

One reason: Ryan is one of a small group of Republicans being vetted as a possible running mate for Mitt Romney. Very few people know exactly who is under consideration, and in most cases they're not talking. But the consensus



House Budget chairman Paul Ryan, after meeting with the president, June 1, 2011

among Republicans I've talked to in recent weeks is that Ryan is getting serious consideration and that his vetting isn't one of those satisfy-a-constituency looks that campaigns undertake just to leak.

A second reason: Ryan's budget proposal, with its bold entitlement reforms, has passed the House of Representatives twice and has been embraced, with few qualifications, by the Republican nominee. It is as close to a governing blueprint as has been offered by either party. And top Democrats and Republicans agree on one thing: The 2012 election cycle is likely to close with a fierce struggle over the implications of the Ryan budget and the direction it lays out for the country—something that is true regardless of whether Ryan is actually on the Republican ticket.

Few who have known him over the years would have predicted that Ryan would be at the center of this national debate. And just two years ago, Republican pollsters and strategists advised their candidates to seek distance from Ryan's plan. But he is now the intellectual leader of the

Republican party. And, at the risk of overstating the case, the outcome of the November elections may turn on whether his party can present and defend his ideas.

Paul Ryan first came to Washington in 1990 as a college intern in the office of Wisconsin's Republican senator Bob Kasten. In theory, Ryan was working for the foreign policy staff, but he spent much of his time in the mailroom. He was a hard worker, even on the unsexy stuff, and he was welcomed back the following summer to an internship on the Senate Small Business Committee, where Kasten was the ranking member.

Ryan reported to Cesar Conda, the Republican staff director. "Paul at age 19 was the exact same person he is today," Conda recalls. "Earnest, personable, and hard-working, with an insatiable appetite for discussing policy ideas." Ryan often popped his head into Conda's office with questions about supply-side economics, interruptions that became so frequent Conda had to give Ryan books to keep him occupied. Among them: *The Way the World Works*, by one-time supply-side guru Jude Wanniski, and George Gilder's seminal *Wealth and Poverty*. (Conda finally recovered his copy of Gilder in 2007, when he noticed it in Ryan's office, heavily marked-up.)

Ryan returned to Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, for his senior year, but before he graduated Conda called to notify him that an economist from the Small Business Committee would be leaving. He offered Ryan the job. "I hired him right out of college because I didn't have the money to hire a more experienced staffer, and I knew he could do the job better than an experienced staffer," says Conda, who is now chief of staff to Senator Marco Rubio.

Kasten lost in 1992, and Ryan, after helping Conda set up a small think tank, took a job working with Bill Bennett and Jack Kemp at their policy shop, Empower America. "Paul had a gift for anonymity," says Bennett. "He was staff, and he thought of himself as staff. He was never the guy with his hand up all the time. It was never, 'Call on me, teacher, call on me, teacher.'" Ryan worked closely with Kemp on economic issues and developed relationships with many of the conservative movement's leading young thinkers.

In 1995, after two years in the think-tank world, Ryan headed back to Capitol Hill. Republicans had just taken Congress, and the House of Representatives under Speaker Newt Gingrich looked like the place where the battle of ideas would be joined. Ryan took a job as legislative director for freshman representative Sam Brownback of Kansas

and immediately was given tremendous responsibility for someone who had just turned 25. Not only was Ryan the top legislative and policy aide in the congressman's office, but Brownback also tasked Ryan with helping lead the policy team for a group called the New Federalists—some three dozen conservatives elected in 1994 devoted to scaling back the federal government. In the spirit of the Republican Revolution, the New Federalists advocated eliminating cabinet agencies and restructuring mandatory spending programs. Brownback says Ryan was the group's driving intellectual force at the staff level.

Working entirely on policy, Ryan wasn't involved in the daily push-and-pull of an elected member's life. So when Brownback had to choose between his philosophy of limited government and the wishes of his constituents, Ryan was always a voice in favor of philosophical consistency.

"He was very puritanical on economic policy," says Brownback, who was elected governor of Kansas after serving one term in the House and two and a half in the Senate (he filled Bob Dole's seat when Dole stepped down to run for president in 1996).

Brownback remembers a particularly heated debate over ethanol subsidies. "Paul was strongly opposed. He said, 'This is wrong. We shouldn't be using taxpayer

dollars to support an industry,'" Brownback recalled. But other Brownback advisers, who were required to think about the political implications of his votes, including his chief of staff, argued just as strongly that a member from Kansas had to support ethanol. "I'm sitting here going—both of these guys are right," recalls Brownback. The debate raged inside the new congressman's inner circle for weeks, and he struggled to make up his mind. He wanted to side with Ryan but understood that the smarter political course was to back the subsidies. In the end, he got a break. "It was divine intervention," he says. "Paul was gone on the day of the vote, so I voted for it."

Brownback says that Ryan is just not a political guy. "It's all policy to him," Brownback says. "People don't appreciate just how much of a policy guy Ryan is and how little of a politician he is."

And yet when Representative Mark Neumann told Ryan he would be leaving his seat in Ryan's home district to challenge Senator Russ Feingold, Ryan moved back home to Janesville to run. Ryan campaigned throughout the 1st District as a pragmatic conservative on what he called a "Pay-check Protection Plan" that included a promise to fight tax increases. Before Neumann won the seat in 1994, Democrat

When he wrote his Roadmap for America's Future, Ryan didn't ask the leadership for permission. 'I figured, ask for forgiveness later and not permission first,' he said.

Les Aspin had held it from 1970 to 1993. Ryan beat Democrat Lydia Spottswood by an impressive 57-43 percent, despite the fact that national Democrats had made the seat one of their top 10 targets. Their optimism was understandable: Bill Clinton had carried the district twice, beating Bob Dole by 12 points two years before Ryan won the seat.

Ryan was regarded as a quiet policy wonk in the early stages of his congressional career—a respected conservative reformer but not necessarily someone his colleagues envisioned as a party leader. He brought to office the same interest in economics and spending that had driven him as a staffer and quickly acquired a greater appreciation of the tradeoffs involved in pushing for free-market policy outcomes while also seeking to serve constituents.

In 2003, Ryan voted for adding a prescription-drug plan to Medicare—an incongruous vote for someone who has worked on entitlement reform for years and one that put him at odds with many of the conservative and libertarian policy types in whose world he lives. Ryan defends the vote, saying President Bush made it clear to him that he intended to sign one version of the bill or another: either a House version that included Ryan-sponsored amendments adding free-market reforms, or the Senate version without them. So Ryan unenthusiastically voted for the House bill. As he told journalist Philip Klein, “You don’t get to take the vote you want in Congress. Sometimes you have to take votes that you don’t want to take, but they’re the best of the two choices.”

Even as he found it more and more difficult to be a purist, Ryan never stopped studying. “When you’re sitting around shooting the breeze, you’d ask him, ‘What are you working on?’” recalls former representative Mark Green, who was elected with Ryan in 1998 and served with him in the House for eight years. “And Paul was always reading some obscure economics text.”

In November 2006, Republicans lost badly in midterm elections marked by broad discontent over the length and direction of the Iraq war and by Democratic charges that a “culture of corruption” had emerged under the leadership of congressional Republicans. Democrats took control of the House (picking up 31 seats) and the Senate, with majorities in both for the first time since 1994.

The party’s nadir would be Ryan’s opportunity. But he didn’t see that immediately. Shortly after the election, Ryan returned to Wisconsin, as he does every year for deer hunting season. But the results of the election were weighing on him. “After we got thumped by Pelosi in ’06, I was just sitting in my tree stand right after that election thinking about, you know, Why am I in Congress? What am I doing? Is it really serving a purpose?”

Ryan says he gave serious thought to quitting politics.

Pelosi had introduced a new five-day work week for the House, which meant Ryan would have perhaps 36 hours a week with his family when Congress was in session: “I considered leaving. I was young, and I don’t want to be a lifetime politician. And I was thinking at the time: Is this worth it?”

After four days of hunting, and thinking, Ryan decided that if he stayed in Congress he would make a strong push for entitlement reform. He couldn’t do that unless he took a larger leadership role. When he returned to Washington, Ryan pushed John Boehner, the lame-duck House majority leader, to make him the ranking Republican on the House Budget Committee. Ryan’s pitch to Boehner and the others on the selection panel was simple: “We’ve wandered off the path of fiscal responsibility, and we’ve got to get serious about getting back on it.” With Boehner’s backing, the panel of two dozen Republicans made Ryan its top Republican, passing over 12 others with more seniority.

The new position gave Ryan two things that would prove crucial to his grand plans: more staff and the ability to have the Congressional Budget Office run numbers for him. Ryan quickly set up a mini think tank inside Congress and got to work. “You can sketch out a vision on the back of a napkin,” he says, “but we had to have real policies with real numbers that would work.”

In early 2007, Ryan, who kept his seat on the House Ways and Means Committee, gave members of that panel a briefing at their regular Wednesday lunch on his plan to draft a Roadmap for America’s Future. He was met with a combination of skepticism and disbelief. “You could just hear the crickets. People were either running for cover or they didn’t understand it,” says Representative Devin Nunes of California. Nunes was the only one of Ryan’s colleagues to tell him after the meeting that he was on board and wanted to help.

Ryan was relieved to have an enthusiastic supporter but wanted Nunes to understand the possible implications of his support. Nunes recalls: “He probably said two dozen times: Are you sure you want to do this? Do you know what you’re getting into?”

Ryan would spend the next year developing and refining his Roadmap. He introduced it as legislation on May 21, 2008. “When I wrote this, I didn’t ask the leadership for permission,” says Ryan. “I figured, ask for forgiveness later and not permission first.”

“America faces a choice between two fiscal and economic futures,” Ryan wrote in the introduction.

In one, the Federal Government attempts to satisfy the multiple needs of a changing population, in a rapidly changing world, with outdated policies that demand ever-rising levels of public spending. The effort overwhelms the government’s capacities, and smothers the economy under crushing burdens of debt and high taxes. It is a future in which America’s best century is the past century.

The second future calls for a transformation—or more accurately, a *restoration* of the principles that created America's freedom and prosperity. It is the path set out in a plan I have developed called *A Roadmap for America's Future*.

Ryan won praise for having the courage to take on these big issues, but he had little actual support. The first version of the Roadmap had eight cosponsors. John McCain ignored it in the presidential election, and voters, by electing Barack Obama, moved America strongly in the opposite direction from the one Ryan had proposed. It would be a long year.

President Obama came to office in the midst of the financial crisis of late 2008 and immediately pushed Congress to pass a stimulus bill that would total some \$787 billion. The cost was only part of the problem. Ryan understood that the elevated spending levels would not be temporary, as promised. In his view, the first year of the Obama administration made his reforms both more necessary and more urgent.

On January 27, 2010, the day President Obama would deliver his State of the Union address, Ryan reintroduced an updated version of the Roadmap and explained his effort in an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal*:

The difference between the Roadmap and the Democrats' approach could not be more clear. From the enactment of a \$1 trillion "stimulus" last February to the current pass-at-all-costs government takeover of health care, the Democratic leadership has followed a "progressive" strategy that will take us closer to a tipping point past which most Americans receive more in government benefits than they pay in taxes—a European-style welfare state where double-digit unemployment becomes a way of life.

Americans don't have to settle for this path of decline. There's still time to choose a different future. That is what the Roadmap offers. It is based on a fundamentally different vision from the one now prevailing in Washington. It focuses the government on its proper role. It restrains government spending, and hence limits the size of government itself.

These contrasting visions would be on display two days later, when the president accepted an invitation from House Republicans to address their retreat in Baltimore. Ryan took the opportunity to confront Obama directly on his promise to freeze discretionary spending.

"Mr. President, first off, thanks for agreeing to accept our invitation here. It is a real pleasure and honor to have you with us here today," Ryan said before introducing his wife and children to the president. He moved quickly to substance, inviting the president to endorse a constitutional line-item veto he'd proposed with then-senator Russ Feingold before getting specific on the budget.

I serve as the ranking member of the Budget Committee, so I want to talk a little budget, if you don't mind. The spending

bills that you have signed into law, the domestic and discretionary spending has been increased by 84 percent. You now want to freeze spending at this elevated level beginning next year. This means that total spending in your budget would grow at three hundredths of 1 percent less than otherwise. I would simply submit that we could do more and start now.

Obama responded directly:

I want to just push back a little bit on the underlying premise, about us increasing spending by 84 percent. Now, look, I talked to Peter Orszag right before I came here, because I suspected I'd be hearing this—I'd be hearing this argument. The fact of the matter is that most of the increases in this year's budget, this past year's budget, were not as a consequence of policies that we initiated, but instead were built in as a consequence of the automatic stabilizers that kick in because of this enormous recession. So the increase in the budget for this past year was actually predicted before I was even sworn into office and had initiated any policies.

Obama went on to claim that anyone who had occupied the White House "would have seen those same increases" and that "a lot of these things happened automatically."

He was wrong. Ryan gently corrected the president.

"I would simply say that automatic stabilizer spending is mandatory spending. The discretionary spending, the bills that Congress signs—that you sign into law—that has increased 84 percent. So . . ."

Obama, having been bested, moved quickly to end the exchange. "We'll have a—we'll have a longer debate on the budget numbers there, all right?"

The exchange won Ryan additional respect from many of his colleagues and earned him lots of public attention. Kind words from Obama at the same gathering elevated Ryan further. The president joked that the media don't cover civil exchanges. "You don't get a lot of credit if I say, 'You know, I think Paul Ryan's a pretty sincere guy and has a beautiful family.' Nobody's going to run that in the newspapers, right?"

The crowd laughed. "And by the way, in case he's going to get a Republican challenge, I didn't mean it," he said, directing his words to Ryan. "I don't want to—I don't want to hurt you, man."

A month later the two men went at it again at the White House's Health Care Summit at Blair House. Ryan challenged the Obama administration's claim that the Democrats' health care proposal would reduce the deficit. "This bill does not control costs," he said. "This bill does not reduce deficits. Instead this bill adds a new health care entitlement at a time when we have no idea how to pay for the entitlements we already have."

Ryan argued that the Congressional Budget Office, which scored the bill, could only judge what is put in front of it. "And what has been placed in front of them is a bill that

is full of gimmicks and smoke and mirrors. Now, what do I mean when I say that? Well, first off, the bill has 10 years of tax increases, about half a trillion dollars, with 10 years of Medicare cuts, about half a trillion dollars, to pay for 6 years of spending. Now, what's the true 10-year cost of this bill in 10 years? That's \$2.3 trillion."

"There really is a difference between us," Ryan said. "And it's basically this: We don't think the government should be in control of all of this. We want people to be in control. And that, at the end of the day, is the big difference."

Obama glared at Ryan throughout his remarks and didn't answer Ryan's specific challenges, saying he didn't "want to get too bogged down," before changing the subject.

If Ryan emerged from these two exchanges with the president with a higher profile than before, it didn't translate into support from the GOP establishment for his reforms. Roadmap 2.0 earned only 14 cosponsors, and the Republican leadership in both House and Senate wanted little to do with entitlement reform, especially as the 2010 midterm elections approached.

In comments to reporters in late July 2010, Boehner, who would end up being among the GOP leaders most supportive of Ryan's efforts, gave it only a half-hearted endorsement. "Parts of it are well done," he said. "Other parts I've got some doubt about, in terms of how good the policy is."

Boehner's equivocation was more love than Ryan saw from other quarters. At times, the organs of the Republican party in Washington actively fought Ryan's efforts to promote his ideas and warned candidates to avoid talking about them at all costs.

"He had to fight internally just to be able to talk about it himself," says Nunes, who was the vice chairman for coalitions of the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC), the arm of the party responsible for electing Republicans to the House. Nunes says that deliberations inside the committee about how to handle Ryan's proposals didn't last long. "It wasn't much of a debate. They're good friends of mine, but I was just outnumbered."

On August 31, 2010, a press secretary for the NRCC

sent an "Alert" to candidates supported by the committee:

MSNBC is trying to convince a Republican candidate to go on the *Dylan Ratigan Show* tonight and support the Paul Ryan Roadmap, therefore supporting Social Security privatization. Please do NOT accept this invitation; it will not end well. In addition, if you receive any questions about the Roadmap, please contact me immediately before answering any questions.

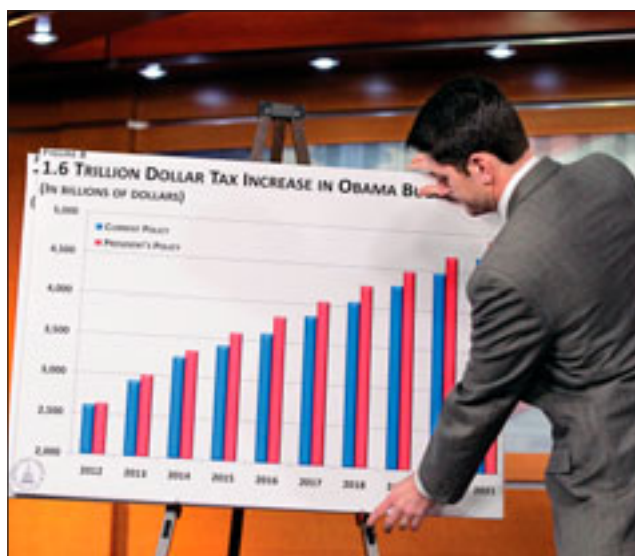
Ryan tried not to take it personally. "I just shrugged my shoulders and said: 'That's what the political people do.'"

But even as the NRCC and other national Republicans were warning against embracing Ryan, many candidates were seeking him out directly. Kristi Noem, a Republican running for the lone House seat in South Dakota,

approached Ryan for help after winning a difficult primary. "I wanted to know the specifics of the reforms in his document, especially on Medicare," she says. "The debt that we're accumulating is one of the main reasons I wanted to come to Washington. I was very concerned about Medicare going bankrupt and Social Security going insolvent." Noem didn't agree with every line of the 2010 version of Ryan's plan—she believes in crop insurance, for instance, and favors preserving traditional Medicare as an option for seniors

(as does the most recent Ryan budget). But she was grateful for the conceptual framework Ryan provided in the conversations they had during her successful campaign.

In Indiana, Dan Coats used Ryan's reforms to help him defeat two other conservatives in the Republican primary. A former senator, Coats didn't just want to return to the Senate. "I had the T-shirt," he says. He decided to run again because he wanted to tackle the big problems facing the country, so he called Ryan and his staff for briefings on the Roadmap. At a Tea Party forum in Warsaw, Indiana, shortly after he joined the race, Coats dismissed his opponents' calls for eliminating cabinet agencies and freezing spending as inadequate solutions to a much bigger problem. Against the advice of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, which had recruited him to run, Coats attended the forum and called for structural entitlement reforms like those in Ryan's Roadmap. The crowd, he said, seemed to get it, and he could see them nodding in approval. "So I just attached myself to



Man with a chart: Ryan responds to the president's FY 2012 budget

Ryan. From that point forward, I talked about those reforms in every presentation I made and in every speech I gave.”

Other candidates did the same, including many who won competitive races: Pat Toomey in Pennsylvania and Ron Johnson in Wisconsin running for the Senate; and Dan Benishek in Michigan, Joe Heck in Nevada, and Sean Duffy in Wisconsin running for the House. In a March 2010 debate televised nationally on *Fox News Sunday*, Senate candidate Marco Rubio in Florida spoke of entitlement reform and said, “I think a great starting point for this conversation is the Ryan Roadmap, and I’m proud to have Representative Ryan’s endorsement in this campaign.”

In all, Ryan’s campaign fielded more than 100 requests for information from candidates. Many of them would soon be incoming House freshmen, a fact that allowed Ryan to establish relationships with people who would later become his most enthusiastic supporters. That election would prove pivotal in Ryan’s quest to place entitlement reform at the center of his party’s agenda.

If the Republican defeat in the 2006 midterms started Ryan’s project, the sweeping GOP victory in the 2010 midterms sharply accelerated its pace. “I think the validation of the 2010 elections gave leadership the courage to proceed—2010 woke people up. The 87 new freshman were a welcome burst of energy, and I think leadership understood that they had two choices: They could lead the parade, or they could get out of the way.”

It was a dramatic turnaround. Just months after national Republicans had warned their candidates about embracing Ryan’s Roadmap, the party chose to give him a high-profile, national platform to sell his reforms when he was invited to give the Republican response to President Obama’s State of the Union address. On January 25, 2011, Ryan made his case.

Our debt is out of control. What was a fiscal challenge is now a fiscal crisis. We cannot deny it; instead we must, as Americans, confront it responsibly. And that is exactly what Republicans pledge to do. Americans are skeptical of both political parties, and that skepticism is justified—especially when it comes to spending. So hold all of us accountable.

In this very room, the House will produce, debate, and advance a budget. Last year—in an unprecedented failure—Congress chose not to pass, or even propose, a budget. The spending spree continued unchecked. We owe you a better choice and a different vision.

Our forthcoming budget is our obligation to you—to show you how we intend to do things differently . . . how we will cut spending to get the debt down . . . help create jobs and prosperity . . . and reform government programs. If we act soon, and if we act responsibly, people in and near retirement will be protected.

“We’re now talking about the things that Paul has been talking about and working on for years,” says Mark Green, his former House colleague. “Entitlements, tax reform, trade policy—normally you look at someone in office and

notice how they change, how their issues change. Now it’s the public coming around to Paul’s set of issues, not the other way around.”

Bill Bennett, who remains close to Ryan and was in the small circle of advisers Ryan consulted last year as he weighed a presidential bid, is surprised at the success of his protégé: “Nobody is a greater admirer of Paul than I am,” Bennett says. “But I would not have predicted this.”

The results of the 2010 elections meant something else, too: Paul Ryan would be chairman of the House Budget Committee and responsible for writing the Republican budget proposal. He pushed immediately to model the budget on the reforms he’d included in his Roadmap. In a debate that remained largely behind the scenes in the opening weeks of the new Congress, the leadership debated the wisdom of giving Ryan the green light. House majority leader Eric Cantor expressed reservations about having members go on the record in support of real entitlement reform. Boehner was more open to the idea. In reality, it probably didn’t matter. Ryan was going to move ahead regardless of what he heard from his colleagues, and he had a considerable army behind him. And when President Obama proposed a budget that failed to deal with entitlements in any serious way, earning him the condemnation of even Obama-friendly editorial boards and columnists, Republicans saw an opportunity to show a contrast with the president on leadership.

Appearing on *Meet the Press* on February 13, Boehner hinted that Ryan would receive the go-ahead. “You’ll see our budget where, I’ve got to believe, we’re going to deal with the entitlement problem.” Boehner’s words surprised even some of his own colleagues. The next day at his pen-and-pad briefing, Cantor sought to sharpen the differences between House Republicans and the White House. “We will also be presenting at the end of next month, towards the beginning of April, our own budget, a serious document that will reflect the type of path we feel we should be taking to address the national fiscal situation, including addressing entitlement reforms, unlike the president did in his budget.” Kevin McCarthy, the majority whip, formally notified his Republican colleagues at a whip meeting that evening.

Ryan presented his budget on April 5, 2011. It included major tax reform, caps on discretionary spending, and, most important, a major overhaul of two of the entitlements that are driving the debt. As he had in his Roadmap, Ryan proposed block-granting Medicaid and transforming Medicare from a guaranteed benefit program into a premium support program that would send money back to seniors to shop for their own health care. Ryan left Social Security out of his proposal in part because he believes it

is the entitlement most susceptible to bipartisan reform.

The Ryan budget, which he called the “Path to Prosperity,” passed the House 235 to 193, with no Democratic votes but support from all but 4 Republicans. It failed in the Democrat-controlled Senate but won the votes of 40 of the upper chamber’s 45 Republicans. In late 2011, Ryan tweaked his Medicare proposal to allow seniors to choose traditional Medicare as one of their options and in the process won the backing of Democratic senator Ron Wyden of Oregon.

The widespread support from congressional Republicans virtually ensured that the party’s presidential candidates would endorse Ryan’s budget. Would the party nominate a candidate who didn’t back a budget supported by 97 percent of its congressional membership? Unlikely.

Mitt Romney’s first statement on the Ryan budget, though, seemed to fall well short of a full-throated embrace. “I applaud Rep. Paul Ryan for recognizing the looming financial crisis that faces our nation and for the creative and bold thinking that he brings to the debate,” he said in a press release. “He is setting the right tone for finally getting spending and entitlements under control. Anyone who has read my book knows that we are on the same page.”

The comment was characteristic of Romney’s cautious approach. But those interested enough to flip through his book, *No Apology*, discovered that Romney did discuss entitlements with some specificity. More interestingly, he lamented that candidates in 2008 hadn’t laid out detailed plans for entitlement reform, and he scolded the media for failing to demand specifics:

I admit to having been more than a little surprised that many of the serious challenges facing America today were not forcefully examined by the media during the 2008 primary and general election campaigns. It’s well understood by those who have studied the federal budget, for example, that our entitlement programs will eventually swamp us. But neither party’s candidates were pushed to explain what they would do about it. In one of our Republican primary debates, for example, we were asked, “Specifically, what would you do to fix Social Security?” Most responded by restating the problem—“Social Security is bankrupt”—rather than by addressing a solution; politicians have learned from experience that it is unwise to touch the “third rail of politics.” But

why is that? Why is it that the media doesn’t hold accountable those who duck this critical issue? Why isn’t it instead that failure to address entitlement and Social Security reform is the “third rail?”

Now that he’s the Republican nominee, does Romney want to press this case? He’s certainly been more specific on entitlement reform than Barack Obama. And there’s an obvious opening for Romney to run a campaign focused on Obama’s failure of leadership on debt and deficits.

Ryan has said all along that he believes Romney should take it. At a town hall in Burlington, Wisconsin, in May, Ryan took a question from a woman who said she was “fed up” with negative campaigning. Then she read this statement: “I want to hear solid solutions to the problems that face all Americans,” she said. “The who, what, when, where,

why, and especially the how we are going to deal with poverty, unemployment, housing, real health care solutions, keeping our military strong. How can you convince President Obama and Governor Romney to run positive campaigns and give us solid solutions? You’re the only one that I’ve seen telling a real plan—this is the second time I’ve seen it now.”

Romney’s 59-point

economic plan, she continued, is too long. “Can you sit down with him and tell him that every time he speaks to a person or a group he needs to emphasize something from his plan that’s not Obama-bashing but rather a reason to vote for Mitt Romney for president?” The question won enthusiastic applause.

“I’d probably have better success with him than with President Obama,” Ryan said, to laughter. “If we don’t like the path we’re on, which people like me don’t, we have an *obligation* to give you an alternative that you can choose. And I do think Mitt Romney’s doing this. If you turned on TV a couple weeks ago you would have seen me running around the state with him because we had this primary here. The last time we had a primary that mattered for Republicans was 1980. This one mattered. So I’ve had an opportunity to speak with this man. I think he understands the fork in the road we are at in this country and the choice of two futures we have.

“And, yes, we must—we have a moral obligation to you to show you a choice,” Ryan continued, his voice



House Republicans rally around Ryan’s ‘Path to Prosperity’

rising. “Do you want to take these challenges on now, do it on our own terms while we can implement attainable, reasonable, phased-in reforms so we can get this debt under control, so this economy can grow? We have *specific* solutions that show exactly how we propose to do that. And, yeah, we need to go to you when we ask you to rehire us, to give us the ability to put this in place so that we can try and save the American idea. . . . That’s his obligation. He’s running against the incumbent. He owes you that choice for you to make. And that, for me, is what we have to do.”

Ryan says he became convinced Romney wanted to present voters with that choice when the two men traveled throughout Wisconsin together before the state’s April 3 primary. Romney and Ryan did six town-hall-style events together. At the first one, Ryan simply introduced Romney and got out of the way. At the second, Romney instructed his staff to leave a microphone for Ryan so that the congressman could jump in if there were any questions directed to him. And for the final four events, Ryan and Romney occupied the stage together and took turns answering questions. Ryan says the change in format was Romney’s idea and no one on the Romney campaign discouraged him from talking about entitlement reform and his budget. “He knows how I talk and what I say. And I’m pretty clear about that stuff. I think he’s comfortable with that.”

In an interview after the Burlington event in May, Ryan said that it was clear Romney “wants to bring this to a choice—not just a referendum on Obama’s bad stewardship, but on the American idea itself and a choice of two futures. For all the risk-aversion stories that have been written about Romney, it seems to me that he’s gotten himself in the mindset of understanding the moment we are facing and the need to bring this real clear conversation to the country about the choice they have to make. . . . This is probably not the election he thought he was going to run, say two years ago when he first decided to run, but I think he’s become extremely comfortable and accepting of what it is and what it needs to be.”

Would Romney run on this choice? Ryan wasn’t sure. “We’ve put these ideas out there. He’s embraced them. So the question is: Are we going to be on offense in articulating these things and defining them? Otherwise, they’re going to define them for us.”

Two months later, Romney has not exactly shied away from Ryan. Several top Ryan staffers have relocated to Boston to help at Romney campaign headquarters. They include Stephen Spruiell, a former Ryan speechwriter, Matt Hoffman, a health care budget analyst, and Jonathan Burks, Ryan’s policy director.

Ryan has been a prominent surrogate for Romney. He has done a town hall for Romney in North Carolina, a press conference in Wisconsin, and numerous campaign-driven media appearances. The Romney campaign has sent out press releases highlighting Ryan’s words or noting his criticism of the president.

I asked Ryan last week if he still believes Romney is meeting this obligation. “I think he really found his voice in the primary,” says Ryan. “And I think he’s regaining his voice. He’s embraced all of these reforms, all of them.”

It’s not exactly a shot at Romney, but it’s not quite an enthusiastic endorsement of his recent campaign, either. Romney has been running almost entirely on criticism of Obama and his poor stewardship of the economy. As Romney said earlier this month, “As long as I’m talking about the economy, I’m going to win.” It’s not hard to imagine that Romney was parroting the analysis he’s been given by his strategists. And despite encouragement from a wide variety of outside analysts (in publications like this magazine and the *Wall Street Journal*) and elected officials (like Chris Christie and Scott Walker) to go bigger and bolder, the Romney campaign has signaled, publicly at least, that it intends to stick to the plan it conceived many months ago. “Romney’s advisers strongly rejected the course-correction suggestion,” the *Washington Post* reported on July 5. The election, they believe, is a referendum on Obama’s economic policies.

If that doesn’t change, Paul Ryan will not be Mitt Romney’s running mate. And the conventional wisdom is that it won’t. Romney is risk-averse, and picking Ryan would be risky. Political reporters and most Republicans in Washington don’t give Ryan a chance.

I asked James Carville, who criticizes Ryan in his new book, *It’s the Middle Class, Stupid*, if he thinks Ryan would be the Obama campaign’s first choice if they were given an opportunity to make the pick for Romney. His answer: “I don’t think he’d be their first choice, but he’d be a clarifying choice. The race wouldn’t be about personalities, it’d be about big issues.”

Democratic strategist Joe Trippi says, “A lot of Democrats I talk to would be doing somersaults if Romney picked Ryan. I think he is a dangerous pick. And I mean that in both ways. He would help us as Democrats make this more a contest about different visions, rather than just a referendum on Obama. But he is good and he is bold. If Mitt Romney actually campaigned on bold proposals to solve these big problems he’d be a much tougher candidate.”

The case for Ryan is simple: No one, with the possible exception of Marco Rubio, would do more to energize the conservative base and unite the party. Rush Limbaugh would praise the pick, but so would David

Brooks and nearly everyone in between. “The response would be overwhelmingly positive,” says Ed Feulner, president of the Heritage Foundation and a longtime leader of the conservative movement. “Overwhelmingly positive. He’s one of us.” Representative Nunes agrees. “If Romney picked him—for conservatives it would be the best pick because it would signify a commitment to solving the long-term fundamental problems of the country.”

And there is evidence that putting Ryan on the ticket would help in Wisconsin. A survey of voters there last week by Public Policy Polling found that Obama is “the clear favorite to win the state” with a lead of 50 percent to 44 percent over Mitt Romney. But “one thing that could make the state look like much more of a toss up is if Romney chooses Paul Ryan as his running mate.” With Ryan on the GOP ticket Obama’s lead shrinks to 47 percent to 46 percent. Pollster Tom Jensen writes: “Ryan’s presence has the effect of further unifying the GOP base around Romney and also helping to bring some independent voters into the fold”—pretty much exactly what a vice presidential pick is supposed to do.

“If I were advising Romney,” said Trippi, “I’d tell him to pick Ryan. I just can’t see him doing it. But as a Democrat I’d personally prefer to see Romney pick a careful candidate, a clone. A gray suit.”

Trippi says that attacks on the Ryan budget are coming regardless of who is on the ticket. He believes the Obama campaign is focusing on Romney’s tenure at Bain because they need to convince voters that he’s willing to disregard the interests of the poor and the middle class to enrich himself and his friends. But the Bain argument is the beginning of their case, not the end of it. If this were a boxing match, these would be the body blows, the punches that set up the roundhouse.

“The Bain stuff is a setup to the Ryan budget,” says Trippi. “The Obama campaign has been struggling to tie Romney to the Ryan budget. If he picks Ryan, that short-circuits that and makes their job easier.” But there’s an

upside for Romney, too, in running a campaign that puts those ideas at the center of his case. “If Romney had been running that campaign he’d be doing a lot better than the campaign he’s been running.”

Ryan has never been a title-chaser. He’s a guileless, straightforward man who wants to advance the ideas he believes in. It’s not quite accurate to say that he’s not political; he’s an effective politician, as one would have to be to consistently post huge victories in a district that Charlie Cook, of the nonpartisan Cook Political Report, has rated

in the dead center—No. 218—on his partisan voter index. But if he were driven primarily by political considerations he wouldn’t have spent most of the last five years doing precisely the opposite of what most Republican pollsters and strategists were recommending.

Unlike some others mentioned as possible running mates, Ryan hasn’t been quietly campaigning for the job. Normally one of the most accessible Republicans on Capitol Hill, Ryan

has turned down virtually all of the interview requests he’s received over the past several weeks. His staff is nervous that this article, originally conceived in February as a narrower look at the history of his entitlement reform proposals, will be published at the height of vice presidential speculation.

Ryan would no doubt accept the job if it were offered. “He told me directly he would do it,” says one Ryan confidant. But he’d be perfectly content to work with a President Romney as chairman of the House Budget Committee.

Ryan has already achieved one objective he’d set for himself when he decided to remain in Congress and work on entitlement reform. “My goal was to move the center of gravity in the Republican party on these issues.”

It seemed naïve, maybe impossible before he started. His next goal could be characterized the same way. “There’s no way you can actually save this country from a debt crisis, and save the American idea, if you don’t do the kinds of things we’re proposing,” Ryan says. “We’ll see how it ends.” ♦



Campaigning together in Middleton, Wisc., April 1, 2012



Women march in London, 1971

The Pill Perplex

'Liberation' and its consequences. BY JONATHAN V. LAST

“Contraceptive sex,” writes Mary Eberstadt, is “the fundamental social fact of our time.”

Eberstadt argues that the invention of the pill and near-mastery of contraception in the West during the 1960s caused a cascade of epochal consequences. Just to tally a few of the big-ticket items: It uncoupled sex from reproduction, caused people to have sex earlier and marry later, increased divorce, cohabitation, and illegitimacy, revolutionized the economic role of women, imploded the fertility rate, and set the modern welfare state on the course to insolvency. The sexual revolution unleashed by contraceptive sex, says Eberstadt, rivals the Communist revolution in terms of its influence on

Adam and Eve After the Pill
Paradoxes of the Sexual Revolution
by Mary Eberstadt
Ignatius Press, 175 pp., \$19.95

the world of the 20th century.

She’s almost certainly right. And the comparison of the two revolutions stems not just from the magnitude of their consequences but also from the intellectual reactions to both. Most Western elites spent the Cold War denying the problems of the Communist state, despite all of the horrible evidence. They have taken much the same stance regarding the consequences of the sexual revolution. Which, on balance, have been quite negative.

For instance, the sexual revolution was a primary factor in the weakening of the marriage culture over the last half-century. The abandonment of mar-

riage, either by cohabitation or through divorce, has by every measure stunted and harmed American children—and women, too (especially lower-class women and minorities, who have fewer avenues of recourse when a marriage either fails to materialize or is terminated). To pick just one of the many statistics: Divorced and unmarried women are twice as likely to suffer physical abuse as married women.

And not only has the sexual revolution made many women worse off, it’s made the average woman less happy as well. A 2009 survey conducted by two Wharton economists put data to what you might have intuited by reading a few decades’ worth of *Marie Claire*: Over the past 35 years, “women’s happiness has fallen both absolutely and relative to men’s in a pervasive way among groups, such that women no longer report being happier than men and, in many

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SHEPARD SHERBELL / CORBIS

instances, now report happiness that is below that of men.”

Eberstadt doesn't belabor these points. The evidence is fairly overwhelming, and while she gives a good shorthand account of it, *Adam and Eve After the Pill* is not intended to relitigate the actual social science. Instead, Eberstadt is more concerned with a secondary question: If everyone knows that the sexual revolution has been such a bust, *why hasn't anyone done anything about it?*

For example, the two groups most harmed by the sexual revolution are among the most powerless in our society: children and lower-class women. Yet conscientious liberals, who rend their garments over every injustice from the plight of unpopular gay high school students to the tragedy of starving refugees in Darfur, are indifferent to this fact. As Eberstadt writes, “People who in any other context would pride themselves on defending the underdog forget just who that underdog is when the subject is the sexual revolution.”

Part of the problem has to do with entrenched interests. The modern economy prefers the sexual revolution because it increases the labor supply and gooses consumption. (Before she became a progressive pin-up, Elizabeth Warren wrote wisely about this problem in *The Two-Income Trap*.) Many men prefer the sexual revolution because it increases their access to sex while decreasing their postsexual obligations. (That is, they prefer it up until the moment their daughter is born.) And feminists cling to the sexual revolution at all costs because, though it diminishes a latent good (happiness), it greatly increases an active good (freedom). Or, at least, it increases the freedom for women to act more like men. Which was the point of feminism all along.

But putting aside the partisans, the sexual revolution has been sustained among the general populace by cultural relativism. Over the last two generations, Western morality has been warped into a funhouse version of itself. Sex, as Eberstadt points out, has been stripped of moral stigmas and codes and reduced “to a kind of hygienic recreation.” The only sex of which you may

safely disapprove these days is “unsafe” sex. But we aren't a society free of strict cultural codes: These rules and strictures have just migrated to other realms. Such as food.

Eberstadt imagines two women—Betty, a 30-year-old housewife in 1958, and her granddaughter, Jennifer, who is 30 today—and considers their attitudes toward sex and food. When it came to food, Betty and her contemporaries had few strong opinions. Betty had her own personal preferences—perhaps she liked beets and hated pot roast—but she recognized these preferences as such, and she didn't spend much time thinking about food as anything but food. Betty did, however, have reasonably strong opinions about the rights and wrongs of sex. She thought that there were things nice girls wouldn't (or at least shouldn't) do, and that there were rules about how people should behave. While she might not have proselytized, she had what Kant called Categorical Imperatives when it came to sexual mores: She followed rules that she believed should be universally acknowledged.

For Jennifer and many of her friends today, these two clusters of views have likely flipped. She has her own preferences when it comes to sex—things she likes to do and things she does not—but she would never imagine that these personal tastes were part of a universal code. So long as sex is between two consenting adults, Jennifer views nearly every other aspect of it pretty much the way Betty viewed beets and pot roasts.

But Jennifer *does* have some pretty strongly held beliefs about food. She thinks it's important to eat healthy foods: no trans fats, no artificial ingredients, organic when possible. She thinks there's a moral case to be made for vegetarianism and buying local, sustainable produce. She believes that there is a mindful, elevated manner in which to approach food—it's her own Categorical Imperative. As Eberstadt concludes, “Betty thinks food is a matter of taste, whereas sex is governed by universal moral law of some kind; and Jennifer thinks exactly the reverse.”

Ultimately it's been these little

transvaluations, performed millions of times over, which have made contraceptive sex and the sexual revolution so unquestionable. The trick, of course, is that contraceptive sex isn't just about sex. The chain reaction it set off has affected pornography and divorce and gender roles. It has shaped the modern college experience. It has altered ideas about child-rearing:

[T]he sexual revolution has profoundly affected the most fundamental aspects of human relationships, including the way women view and treat men; the way men view and treat women; and it has even undermined one of the deepest shared tasks of men and women, which is the protection of children from forces that would harm them.

The scope of her work is depressingly grand, yet Eberstadt retains a winsome equanimity. She believes that the tide might yet recede, so long as we're willing to face facts. And she believes—in another parallel she draws with the Cold War—that the right side need not be the losing side. As evidence, Eberstadt offers the amazing case of America's double-reverse on pedophilia. It's difficult to remember, but from the 1970s until the 1990s there was a sustained effort to legitimize pedophilia as merely another lifestyle choice. (Eberstadt coined the term “Pedophilia Chic” in these pages.) It nearly succeeded. But during the last 10 years something remarkable happened: As the near-universal condemnation of Roman Polanski showed in 2009, pedophilia was restigmatized.

Eberstadt suggests that this reversal was largely the byproduct of another scandal—the Roman Catholic church's legacy of priestly abuse. The crimes committed within the church were irresistible to the church's critics, many of whom were part of the sexual avant-garde and disliked the church specifically because of its teachings on sex. Empowering these critics, Eberstadt wryly notes, “logically created a whole new class of antipederasts.”

This willingness to reconsider already-reconsidered norms leaves Eberstadt hopeful. So hopeful, in fact, that she believes other aspects of the

sexual revolution might be rolled back, too. She suggests, for instance, that pornography might be the new tobacco: Where the long march against tobacco began in 1964 with the first surgeon general's warning, Eberstadt believes that the evidence of porn's unpleasant societal effects may eventually restore its disreputation.

In the case of pornography, Eberstadt may be overly optimistic. For one thing, the decades-long campaign against tobacco was aided by the fact that it was a physical product: Tobacco had points of sale and a distribution chain and an entire corporate industry behind it. You could tax Big Tobacco, and sue it, and ultimately use its own revenues to fund the campaign against it.

Pornography, by contrast, is essentially ether. It is disseminated mostly online, largely for free. There is no Big Porn, but a handful of large-scale corporations, largely disintermediated by the Internet. Modern pornography has been so thoroughly democratized that, today, the bulk of it is produced by thousands of small, professional (and judgment-proof) outfits. And this archipelago of "professional" stuff leaves aside the ocean of porn created and disseminated by amateurs who do it as a hobby. Even if society were to change its mind about pornography, it is hard to see how a campaign against porn would work.

Mary Eberstadt is a happy warrior, and *Adam and Eve After the Pill* refuses to trade in despair. Yet my own sense is that we may be in more trouble than she allows. In her final chapter, Eberstadt examines how fully Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae* has been vindicated. For years, the Catholic church was ridiculed for suggesting that contraceptive sex would cause trouble. *Humanae Vitae* predicted that, as a result of this revolution, men would treat women with less respect and care, infidelity would flourish, general moral standards would fall, and governments would insert themselves into people's reproductive lives. Check, check, check, and check.

Yet this vindication is problematic. Eberstadt is most likely correct that pedophilia was restigmatized because the left was goaded into doing so as

part of its larger war against religion. And any reconsidering of the sexual revolution requires the participation of both conservatives and liberals. But the prescience of *Humanae Vitae*, and the degree to which orthodox religion was right to be skeptical of contraception and amoral sex, may well be part of why the left has doubled-down on the

sexual revolution every time it's been confronted with its problems.

And of all the ways in which the sexual revolution mirrors the fight over communism, this is the most depressing: that, to paraphrase Malcolm Muggeridge, at the end of the day, people believe lies not because they have to, but because they want to. ♦



Yanks Are Coming

Two ways of looking at our most successful baseball club. BY DAVID GUASPARI

Damn Yankees is a bathroom book, which I mean in the nicest way: short, generally entertaining, with essays from authors often better known as writers than as sportswriters. Most would engage a nonfan and none presupposes warm feelings for the Yankee imperium.

The essays are performances, and the editor has assembled considerable variety in subject and tone. There is one comic rant of loathing for everything Yankee—but only one. Some may be too self-consciously “on,” and occasional lapses occur into the overripe prose and questionable sociology that can get sportswriting sent to the children's table. How often, after all, do strong men truly hush in awe when a phenom strides to the plate for his batting practice swings? How exactly does a writer “burnish” a story in his “gut”? (Would you touch the result with tongs?) And what could it mean to be a city's “best baseball

restaurant”? (Evidently, it includes naming menu items after players.) These are cavils; there is much to enjoy.

Colum McCann, an Irish novelist living in New York, takes his children to games at Yankee Stadium; his thoughts transport him to his Dublin boyhood and “the reckless joy of the past.” A memoir by J.R. Moehringer reads like a short story: On a visit to the stadium with his moody grandfather (a man soured by failing to make the majors), they encounter a sort of Ancient Mariner who claims to be the oldest living Yankee.

At the geek extreme, Bill James ranks the 100 best seasons by a Yankee catcher (admitting that more thought could have been given to the last 50). He alternates baseball talk with riffs that show his magpie delight in factual oddity, such as the fact there had never been a Kevin in the major leagues until 1965, but in the 1980s there occurred a veritable explosion of Kevins, coinciding with an explosion of Jeffs.

The novelist Pete Dexter traces the downward spiral of Chuck Knoblauch,

Damn Yankees
Twenty-Four Major League Writers on the World's Most Loved (and Hated) Team
edited by Rob Fleder
Ecco, 304 pp., \$27.99

Pinstripe Empire
The New York Yankees from Before the Babe to After the Boss
by Marty Appel
Bloomsbury, 640 pp., \$28

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a star second baseman who developed a psychological tic that left him unable to make routine throws to first. (One misfire skipped off the roof of the Yankees' dugout into the stands and hit Keith Olbermann's mother between the eyes.) Much of the telling is very funny, but the laughter begins to feel heartless. Unable to field his position, Knoblauch was moved to the outfield, at which point his offense also disappeared—as, soon thereafter, did he. He tries now to lead an anonymous life, and has surfaced only through some run-ins with the law.

The final chapter is a catalogue of team records—some straightforward, some curious—such as: The worst attendance at Yankee Stadium was 413, on September 25, 1966, leaving some 65,000 seats vacant. And who knew that Babe Ruth leads all Yankees in the number of times caught stealing?

Pinstripe Empire is a book for fans, a year-by-year chronicle of the Yankees from their origins in 1903 as the Highlanders (a.k.a. New York Americans) through 2011. It includes cameos of trainers, groundskeepers, clubhouse men, and white-collar staff, and traces the sometimes labyrinthine financial dealings of the owners.

Marty Appel joined the Yankees at age 19 to answer Mickey Mantle's fan-mail and became, at 24, their director of public relations. Now the head of his own PR firm, he has done some diligent research—for example, reconstructing from archival scraps the most accurate version he can of Lou Gehrig's famous farewell speech. He gives his story texture by tracing small threads that bind the history of the game. Wally Pipp, whom Gehrig replaced at the start of his seemingly unsurpassable stretch of 2,130 consecutive games played, was in the stands when Gehrig benched himself to end the streak. And when Cal Ripken broke that record 56 years later, Joe DiMaggio, who'd been a teammate of Gehrig, was present to offer congratulations.

This is a friendly history, which I also mean in a nice way. Unedifying data—a list of steroids-tainted players, acknowledgment that Mantle's public persona of clean-living whole-

someness was “not quite the case”—are duly noted but not dwelt on, though Appel is too easy on the Yankees' slowness to sign their first black player, Elston Howard. He seems to accept, as did Arthur Daley of the *New York Times*, the official line that management was simply waiting for a player to come along who was up to their standard and of “the Yankee

then, leaving aside the freak split season of 1981, couldn't win a pennant for nearly 20 years.

As noted in *Damn Yankees*, Steinbrenner's talent was marketing and monetizing every conceivable Yankee asset. And he deserves credit for pouring the great bulk of the resulting revenue back into the team, however much was then wasted by his med-



Lou Gehrig, Joe DiMaggio, Bill Dickey, George Selkirk, ca. 1937

type.” A memoir by Howard's widow (in coauthored prose that erased any sign of human handiwork) notes that a standard excluding Willie Mays, Roy Campanella, Don Newcombe, and Ernie Banks is a remarkable one. Her book also quotes, without citing sources, adamant private declarations by Yankee management of their wish to keep the team white.

According to *Forbes*, the Yankees—estimated value, \$1.7 billion—are the third most valuable sports franchise in the world. It might therefore be forgotten that, after dominating the game from 1920 to 1964 (with 29 pennants and 19 championships), they collapsed. They were still lousy in 1973, when they were bought by a syndicate headed by George Steinbrenner (known in my household as The Great Satan). They won the World Series in 1977 and 1978; but

dling. As the head of baseball's most conspicuous franchise for 37 years, Steinbrenner had an outsized influence on the game, for good and ill, beginning with his aggressive bidding for free agents: Why risk the expense of developing players who might not pan out when he could buy proven stars? Though “proven celebrities” might be more accurate, he resisted the rational, empirical methods for evaluating talent that have acquired the dopey name of “sabermetrics” (one of Bill James's less felicitous coinages).

Appel's summation of the Steinbrenner era is generous to a fault. The players, he says, loved Steinbrenner for paying big salaries and for surrounding them with talented teammates; fans liked winners; the media liked good copy, the soap opera of hirings and firings and feuds; and other teams weren't about to turn down the

revenues his methods helped to generate. On the other hand, Steinbrenner was “a very demanding boss, and compliments weren’t his strong suit.” And Mrs. Lincoln had had better nights at the theater. Many of his players and managers loathed him (Appel quotes some), and after particularly shabby treatment, Yogi Berra, one of nature’s noblemen, vowed never to set foot in Yankee Stadium while Steinbrenner remained in charge. Reconciliations occurred when Steinbrenner’s health began to decline, which is natural and decent—and by then, of course, he had stopped meddling. Steinbrenner-in-a-nutshell: He berated the Yankees’ president for losing a coin toss to decide home field for a playoff game with, “You [expletive] idiot! Everyone knows it comes up tails 70 percent of the time!”

With so much time spent center stage, the Yankees inevitably play a role in many famous baseball stories/urban legends. Appel puts on his historian’s hat to retell them, including the called shot (doubtful), *No, No, Nanette* (nope), and Wally Pipp’s headache (a muddled account that tries to merge two conflicting stories; snopes.com is more persuasive). One correction: Appel repeats the legend of the line drive that would have beaten the Yankees in the seventh game of the 1962 World Series if Willie McCovey had pulled it by just “a foot.” Make that “five feet.” You can watch the play on YouTube.

A lengthy, nearly-every-day baseball season evolves like some stately historical process—in contrast, for example, to football’s handful of intense pitched battles. The action is linear, which lends itself to narration—a game on the radio is a savory experience—and to keeping records that allow meaningful comparisons across generations of players.

So its past is very much present, and a real baseball fan must, I think, love the game’s history. As one imprinted in childhood as a Yankees fan, and therefore destined to be stigmatized among baseball’s 1 percenters, I found it a pleasure to fill in blank spaces and freshen old memories with Appel’s labor of love. ♦

BCA

Uncivil Tongues

Should ‘hate speech’ trump our principle of free expression? BY JOSEPH BOTTUM

It’s John Stuart Mill’s world. Jeremy Waldron is just living in it. Not that Waldron isn’t a smart guy in his own right. A law professor at NYU and Oxford, the author of 10 books, one of Ronald Dworkin’s favorite students, and a leading figure in debates about the use of foreign law in American courts, Waldron has established himself at the center of the academic profession. And just as he did with his 2010 book on torture, he has injected himself into contemporary policy debates with this latest work.

His way of entering that debate is a little peculiar, for he more or less admits that the hate-speech laws he favors have little chance of passing constitutional muster. But then, he says, the American Constitution forces us to allow any number of things—gun ownership, for example—that the rest of the world sees as uncivilized, so why should free speech be any different? According to Waldron, the absence of hate-speech law is a failure of our constitutional way of governing, for hate speech is a grievous harm that cries out for punishments that the American government is prohibited from assigning.

I have to confess, here at the outset, that I find *The Harm in Hate Speech* a horrifying book; so will you, I imagine. But the curious thing is that Waldron clearly does not intend it to be divisive. He’s not aiming to twit the unthinking bourgeoisie or be a gadfly. The voice of thoughtfulness runs through the book, even while it tries to erase a line of classical liberalism that

runs from John Milton and John Locke down to Mill—a line of liberalism that profoundly influenced the American Founders and defines us still. Waldron’s voice of moderation never wavers, even while saying things with the most outrageous consequences.

Think of it this way: Take a figure—Charles Murray, say. To read his critics you’d think that Murray deliberately and loudly insulted various racial and ethnic

groups in *The Bell Curve*, the 1994 book on intelligence he coauthored with Richard Herrnstein, and *Human Accomplishment*, his 2003 volume that ended up a paean to Western civilization. For such transgressions against received consensus, the Victorians would have crossed Murray off their dinner lists. They would have sent him to Coventry. Jeremy Waldron would send him to jail. But thoughtfully and moderately.

Some of what Waldron has to say is welcome. He points out, for instance, the unctuous and self-serving tone that usually accompanies an invocation of that potted bit of pseudo-Voltaire about how I detest what you say but will defend to the death your right to say it. More significantly, Waldron deserves some credit for the central thrust of his book, which is an attempt to shift the harm of hate speech from the victims to the culture. We should object to hate speech, he suggests, not just because it harms minorities, but also because our entire civil society is harmed when hate speech is allowed to go unchecked.

The idea is that hate-speech laws would not be used for negatively protecting individuals against offense;

The Harm in Hate Speech
by Jeremy Waldron
Harvard, 304 pp., \$26.95

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such laws would be designed, instead, for the affirmative protection of dignity. We should not have censorship for the sake of sheltering minorities, but for the sake of allowing citizens to participate in the social order with the respect their citizenship demands. Under First Amendment jurisprudence, the offensiveness of a public statement does not touch the freedom a person has to say it, but Waldron believes that the damage to the dignity of citizens may be another matter.

In our current climate of personal grievance, any appeal to the broadness of civil society is gratefully received. We may be less grateful for the legal consequences of the appeal in *The Harm in Hate Speech*, but Waldron is at least consistent. If the real victim is society, then we are forced to stop thinking of hate speech as

a tort (a harm done to an individual), and start thinking of it as a crime (a harm done to the public order).

Forced, that is to say, if law is the only device by which civil society can be constructed and maintained. Attempting to defend his concept of “group libel,” Waldron undertakes a complicated analysis of the hurt done to an individual by an insult to the ethnic or religious group to which he belongs—which is more complicated than the dull and obvious point needs. Meanwhile, Waldron lacks significant analysis of the relation of groups, or even individuals, to the general society, when the need for such sophistication in this analysis fairly screams from the text. All through *The Harm in Hate Speech*, he takes a John Rawls-above-the-fray stance—that extremely annoying assumption that somehow he (and his ilk) are the arbiters of society: groupless themselves, and thus able to tell the rest of us how us to treat certain groups.

The real problem, however, is that Waldron cannot conceive of any way to redress harm except through law.

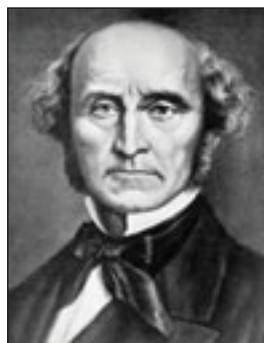
The type of liberalism that defined the American Founding, and continued into the philosophy of John Stuart Mill, concluded that acceptance of some offensiveness was the price that had to be paid in order to prevent the government from curtailing the freedom of its citizens. Mill was hardly alone in adding that social culture could be as oppressive as political government, but in *On Liberty*, he gave fullest expression to the idea: In order to maintain freedom, we have to limit both the reach of law and the power of social convention.



John Milton



John Locke



John Stuart Mill

Waldron tries to erase a line of classical liberalism that runs from John Milton and John Locke down to Mill—one that profoundly influenced the American Founders and defines us still.

Manners, in other words. It would be a fascinating exercise to read through the Founding Fathers and try to identify which problems they expected society to address and which they thought government would need to solve. Regardless, Jeremy Waldron is caught in a conundrum. To solve the problem of the First Amendment’s prohibition against laws banning expression, he moves hate speech from the category of individual harm to the category of social harm—but then cannot bring himself to deploy the social tool of manners as some-

thing that might address the harm.

Thus, he has to make a law. And it is a law that so offends the American sense of limited government that it practically begs to be violated. If it’s ill-mannered to say that Muslims are fundamentally antidemocratic, or Roman Catholics are deeply un-American, then I won’t say it, even if I believe those propositions to be true. But if it’s against the law to say such things, then I’ll shout them to the rooftops, even if I *don’t* believe them. As laws, prohibitions against hate speech

are offensive to the sense of American citizenship that was formed at the time of the Founding and is maintained to this day. As rules of civil behavior, prohibitions against hate speech are merely good manners.

Early in *The Harm in Hate Speech*, Waldron tells the

story of a Muslim man, walking with his children, who sees a sign that says, “Muslims and 9/11! Don’t serve them, don’t speak to them, and don’t let them in.” He intends the visceral offensiveness of the scene to lead us to enact laws against hate speech. Unfortunately, that’s what salesmen call a “bait and switch”—for it’s not the illegality but the impoliteness of the sign that offends us. As a matter of law, I rather like the sign: It helps prove what a robust and strong Constitution we have, when government cannot intervene to prohibit offensive speech.

The Harm in Hate Speech is state-of-the-art for an academic treatise, and it makes the best case currently available for enacting hate-speech laws. But even if we find the argument persuasive, the centrality of free speech for the American Founders ought to give us pause. They had actually experienced governmental censorship of the kind for which Jeremy Waldron calls, in a way no later American ever has. Isn’t an answer to Waldron’s argument that their response was the First Amendment? ♦

Howdy, Niebuhr

Theologian, philosopher, and sage in one package.

BY JORDAN MICHAEL SMITH

When Reinhold Niebuhr died in June 1971, the *New York Times* obituary described him as “a theologian who preached in the marketplace, a philosopher of ethics who applied his belief to everyday moral predicaments, and a political liberal who subscribed to a hard-boiled pragmatism.” That apt summary sufficiently explains why Niebuhr mattered to his time. What it doesn’t explain is why Niebuhr matters to ours. After all, in the 1980s and ’90s, Niebuhr was seldom referenced in political debates. It was only after the trauma of 9/11 that he became the most talked-about theologian in American discourse, referred to by everyone from Senator Barack Obama to Senator John McCain.

Since then, several attempts have been made to explain Niebuhr’s revival. A feature in the *Atlantic* unsatisfactorily claimed it was because “Niebuhr, better than any contemporary thinker, got to the roots of the conflict between American ideals and their unintended consequences, like those the United States now faces in Iraq.” The intellectual historian John Patrick Diggins’s final book, *Why Niebuhr Now?*, never entirely answered the question in its title.

The latest effort comes from Charles Lemert, a sociologist and professor emeritus at Wesleyan University. It is an installment in the Yale Press’s valuable *Why X Matters* series, whose topics include Lionel Trilling, Hannah Arendt, and the Dreyfus Affair. Like the authors of other entries in the series, Lemert is

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Why Niebuhr Matters

by Charles Lemert
Yale, 253 pp., \$26



Reinhold Niebuhr, 1959

not so much a critic of his subject as president of the fan club. Comparing Augustine’s *City of God* to Niebuhr’s *Nature and Destiny of Man*, he writes, “Books like these are important because they were so quick to a historical moment that they reset the calculus of what man’s human destiny might be.” Whichever way this convoluted sentence is read, it is too flattering. Lemert softens Niebuhr’s early commitment to Marxism, which was mercifully short-lived but nonetheless very real.

As did Diggins, Lemert devotes equal time to Niebuhr the theologian, Niebuhr the philosopher, and Niebuhr the political analyst. Lemert mixes biography with discussion of Niebuhr’s ideas, and adds a dose of meditation on the state of the world for usually-not-good measure:

What Niebuhr leaves to our time are his theories and practical politics of an honest, true-to-historical-fact realism—a political realism that refuses to abandon high moral principles to short-term practical compromises.

In addition, Niebuhr was able to extract from scriptures lessons and ideas accessible even to nonbelievers. Thus, secular men like Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. found Niebuhr’s account of man’s eternal sin valuable because it offered permanent insights into human nature. One “reason why there were once, and still are, Atheists for Niebuhr is that his religious views, though firm, even harsh, were offered with such a clear and balanced grasp of the nature of secular modernity,” Lemert posits. “So much of what passes today as evangelical religion in America is openly, even aggressively, hostile to what some evangelicals call secular humanity.” This indeed is a key to Niebuhr’s continued appeal: Like his disciple Martin Luther King, Niebuhr wrestled honestly with a secular world but from a ground buttressed in the rich tradition of religious thinking.

Less convincingly, Lemert argues that Niebuhr has been recovered because of the decline of the West, and the revival of political religion: “So far as one can tell in the short run, both threats are seismic shifts in the global order; and both are strangely connected in ways that are not easily explained by techno-troubles and economic crises—the dark underbellies of globalization.” This is a bizarre explanation, considering that Niebuhr’s popularity arguably reached its zenith in 1948, when he was featured on the cover of *Time*’s 25th-anniversary issue. The West’s global dominance at the time was at its apex, and among all the threats menacing the globe, political religion did not seem salient.

Politically, Niebuhr offers a framework for America to engage with the world—he was an ardent opponent of isolationism in the 1930s—without succumbing to evil. “Our idealists are divided between those who would renounce the responsibilities of power for the sake of preserving

the purity of our soul and those who are ready to cover every ambiguity of good and evil in our actions by the frantic insistence that any measure taken in a good cause must be unequivocally virtuous,” he wrote in *The Irony of American History*.

Echoing Aristotle’s Doctrine of the Mean, Niebuhr suggested that the best position was between two extremes: that of assuming a pose of pure righ-

teousness, and that of refraining from living up to international responsibilities. This can easily become a way of justifying evil, of absolving oneself of one’s sins—which is why Niebuhr insisted on shedding the myth of innocence from the beginning. Doing so is the first step towards wisdom, and nobody taught that principle better than Niebuhr. For that alone, he matters to our time, as to his. ♦



Modernist Master

Fifty years since his death, we remain in Faulkner’s shadow. BY EDWIN M. YODER JR.

April seventh, 1928: *Through the fence, between the curling flower spaces, I could see them hitting. They were coming toward where the flag was and I went along the fence. Luster was hunting in the grass by the flower tree. They took the flag out and they were hitting. Then they put the flag back and they went to the table, and he hit and the other hit . . .*

“Here, caddie.” He hit. They went away across the pasture. I held to the fence and watched them going away.

“Listen at you, now.” Luster said. “Aint you something, thirty three years old, going on that way. . . . Hush up that moaning.”

“Read this, Bud—it’s a real son-of-a-bitch,” the author of a famous American novel said as he handed the typescript of *The Sound and the Fury* to an old friend one day in New York. Many baffled readers of this country’s first great work of modernist fiction would cry, “Hear! Hear!” Indeed, it’s a real son-of-a-bitch.

As of July 6, we are 50 years beyond William Faulkner’s death. And in observance of that milestone, the Folio Society has published an anniversary edition of the novel (\$345), printing in varicol-

ored inks the time sequences covered by its most baffling narrative voice, that of the idiot Compson brother, Benjy. There were no footnotes to advise the reader that Benjy, in his vapid innocence, is “moaning” for his lost sister, Caddy, and believes the golfers are calling her name—nor that the “pasture,” long alienated from the family property, has become a golf course.

Faulkner, in later interviews, did try to explain what he was attempting in *The Sound and the Fury*. The story, he said, began with the mental picture of an adorable little girl with muddy drawers climbing a tree to peer through the window at her grandmother’s funeral—and to describe it to her three less adventuresome brothers who are standing below:

It was a story without a plot, of some children being sent away from the house during the grandmother’s funeral and then the idea struck me to see how much more I could have got out of the idea . . . if one of those children had been truly innocent, that is, an idiot. So the idiot was born and then I became interested in the relationship of the idiot to the world and just where could he get the tenderness, the help, to shield him. . . . And so . . . his sister began to emerge, then the brother. . . . Then . . . someone to tell the story, so Quentin appeared.

I hear skeptics protesting, *Wait a minute! What’s so damned important about so ordinary a story to justify so much technical huffing and puffing?* It is the perennial protest of those who think all stories, however elusive, should be told straight, the way we think they happened, in a novel as on the front page or gossip column of the morning paper. It is a reasonable protest, though scarcely new; so herewith one reader’s attempt to satisfy it.

But! by the way, the story told in *The Sound and the Fury* is far from ordinary; it involves the epic decline of a proud family, the Compsons of Jefferson, Mississippi (by bastardy, idiocy, alienation, suicide, monomania, bad debts, drunkenness, mean degeneracy, and incompetence), and thus, by inference, of a regional social order.

Who can wonder that even sophisticated readers remain sharply divided on the merits of Faulkner’s fiction and on the mythic world he created? One thing, however, is undebatable: Almost a century after he began to write, Faulkner stands at the top of the slippery pole of “modernism”—the American branch of it, at least. The term descends from the early decades of the last century (modernism is obviously no longer “modern” in the chronological sense). Its roots remain as elusive as Faulkner’s storytelling; but it was no coincidence that traditional novelizing (Dickens, Trollope, Hardy, et al.) began to fragment when new theories in physics and psychology dawned on the literary imagination and expanded our interest in the intricate byways of human consciousness.

Such figures as Einstein, Freud, and Joyce were among Faulkner’s collaborators in this narrative mischief—if you consider it so, as many do. A story is reliably told that when Faulkner paid a visit to Albert Einstein in Princeton, the two sat in mutually respectful silence, finding no small talk, smoking their pipes and sipping Mrs. Einstein’s coffee, then parted—another of those lamentable lost opportunities, like the chance encounter of Joyce and Proust in Paris one evening. (However, Faulkner so venerated his fellow genius that he placed a period after the Dr. in Einstein’s name, the only instance in his writings

Edwin M. Yoder Jr. is the author, most recently, of Vacancy: A Judicial Misadventure.

in which such titles were punctuated.)

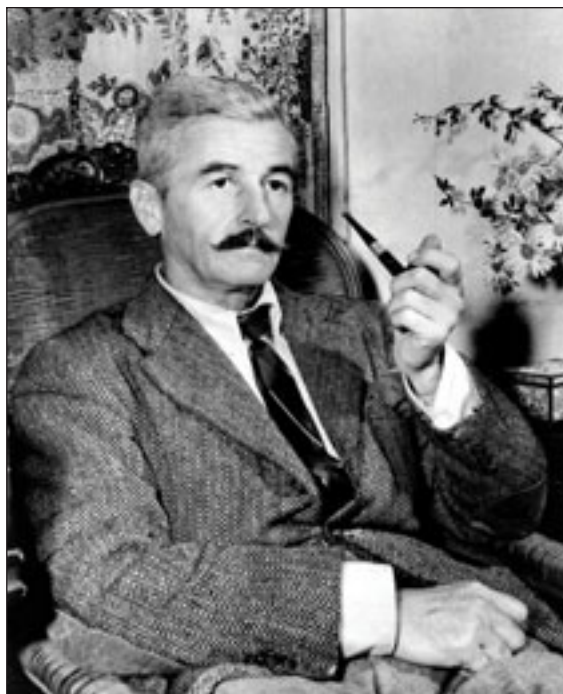
Faulkner is frequently viewed as a Southern gothic or romantic regionalist. Those trace elements exist in his stories, but do not define them. Faulkner created a mythic county called Yoknapatawpha and peopled it with characters rich and poor, virtuous and vicious, established and parvenu, drawn from both observation and imagination. In Faulkner's world, as in all settled societies, castes and locales differ—Jefferson, the county seat (based on Oxford, Mississippi), from Frenchman's Bend, an outlying rural community. The Compsons, principal family of *The Sound and the Fury*, are from the top drawer of the planter gentry, while the Snopeses, whose story opens with *The Hamlet*, are a byword for scheming “white trash.”

But Faulkner's people aren't predictable, and he doesn't hesitate to show that Jason Compson, Benjy's sneering brother, is as mean, dishonest, and calculating as any Snopes, while certain latter-day members of the Snopes tribe achieve a measure of bourgeois respectability, even as bankers. For Faulkner, virtue lies not in superficial marks of rank, race, or origin, but in the capacity to observe a code of honor, marked by pride, compassion, and pity.

His stories and novels are set in a sometimes surreal, natural world of the Delta, and the hills and bottomlands. He was a lifelong outdoorsman, hunter, horseman, and gentleman farmer. But as Cleanth Brooks has observed, Faulkner is no Rousseauist, idealizing nature and identifying instinct with innocence. In his stories, nature is latent with menace and violence, vengeance and dark comedy. An exploitative view of the wilderness intimates evil; for man owes respect to the land, whose possession is a trust. Ownership is a kind of human delusion, related to the evil of slavery, the primal curse which must be expiated.

These themes are not political: The power of the natural world goes behind and beyond civic structures. Faulkner's animals, wild or domestic,

are beautifully observed and often take on a numinous quality. Such is Old Ben, the ancient, invulnerable bear with 53 bullets in him, the hero of his best-known story. Another is the buck deer that young Isaac McCaslin shoots in his first hunt. Then there are the wild Texas mavericks brought to Frenchman's Bend for sale to the



William Faulkner, 1950

gullible in “Spotted Horses,” one of Faulkner's wildly funny stories:

Larger than rabbits and gaudy as parrots. . . . Calico-coated, small-bodied, with delicate legs and pink faces in which their mismatched eyes rolled . . . wild as deer, deadly as rattlesnakes, quiet as doves.

These horses are not drawn from life; they are not the horses of George Stubbs. They are impressionist animals and would be at home in a painting by Renoir.

Finally, as for the narrative tricks that trouble so many novice readers, there is this to be said: Faulkner is a ventriloquist who projects an inventive authorial voice through various channels. Benjy, the idiot, is one—but there are others. There is the agitated brooding of Quentin Compson, who is driven mad by his obsession with the family decline, and

who finally drowns himself in far-off Cambridge, Massachusetts. These technical ingenuities are keys to the deeper pleasures of Faulkner's work. His ear for the registers of human speech is unrivaled in American fiction, tuned to the Southern tradition of bardic storytelling.

At least since the English critic Percy Lubbock wrote his seminal study *The Craft of Fiction* (1921), it has been conceded that the novel has the same potential for high art as older forms of epic and drama. By study and the force of his genius, Faulkner grasped its potential and, in a burst of brilliant productivity between the late 1920s and the mid-1930s, made himself a major voice of the modernist movement. We do well to discount the superstition (including his own mischievous statements) that he was a bumpkin who stumbled into the writing trade. The most notorious tease is his preface to the 1935 Modern Library edition of *Sanctuary*:

This book was written three years ago . . . a cheap idea because it was deliberately conceived to make money. . . . I took a little time out and speculated what a person in Mississippi would believe to be current trends, chose what I thought was the right answer and invented the most horrific tale I could imagine and wrote it in about three weeks.

Up to a point, Mr. Faulkner! *Sanctuary* is indeed a “horrific tale,” featuring the brutal and impotent Popeye, who abducts an Ole Miss coed and rapes her with a corncob; but calling the story horrific is the only statement the author makes about this dark and brilliant fable that isn't pure moonshine. Elsewhere in the same introduction he complains that he has been misjudged by most of the critics and literary tastemakers, and that his early masterpieces, including *The Sound and the Fury*, were dismissed by indolent and conventional readers as gibberish.

It is true, alas. But today, half a century after his death, Faulkner is even more happily crowned with laurels and honors, and we know better. ♦

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Magic Steven

A prodigious filmmaker at the crossroads.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

The Oscar-winning director Steven Soderbergh, who has had the most interesting career of any hotshot American filmmaker over the past quarter-century, is tired, he says. Tired of making movies. He's either going to retire or take a sabbatical. This is a very strange thing for Soderbergh to say. He first started saying it a year ago, and has made three movies since. Three.

The man makes movies the way other people tweet. He has the kind of creative output most artists can only dream of. Soderbergh bounces between little indie projects and big Hollywood fare; he is so skilled behind the camera (he often photographs his own movies) that he can do both with impressive economy and control. In the big-budget arena, he made the superb all-star medical-catastrophe thriller *Contagion* for an astonishing \$60 million; any other director would have brought it in at twice the price.

In theaters right now is a peculiar low-budget project called *Magic Mike*, a character study of a male stripper who wants to be a furniture maker—an initially interesting but eventually stultifying mixture of *Flashdance* and *Shampoo*, with a dash of the terrific and forgotten 1976 picture called *Lifeguard* thrown in the mix. Though *Magic Mike* is set in the present, Soderbergh consciously echoes the dilatory, slightly pot-addled 1970s movies of the now-forgotten Hal Ashby, who made *Shampoo*, *Harold and Maude*, *The Last Detail*, *Bound for Glory*, *Coming Home*, and *Being There* in an unprecedented hot streak over eight years as he was frying his own brain with drugs and alcohol.

Magic Mike is 30 minutes of story

with about 80 minutes of well-built guys dancing badly, pseudo-orgies, and an intolerable Matthew McConaughey redefining the term “overacting” as he practically opens his mouth



Steven Soderbergh, 2011

wide enough to swallow the camera on several occasions.

It follows an equally peculiar project called *Haywire*, a no-holds-barred action picture about assassins starring a gorgeous mixed-martial-arts champion named Gina Carano. *Haywire* didn't do very well, but *Magic Mike*—which features star-of-the-moment Channing Tatum—exploded at the box office its first weekend. It cost \$7 million and earned \$40 million; it will end up making \$100 million at least.

The odd thing is that such works would seem to be passion projects for Soderbergh—or at least enjoyable experiments. Otherwise, why would he bother with them? Certainly they allow him to indulge what one might gently call a certain sexually obsessive nature; among his little works are two porn-obsessed movies, *Full Frontal* and *The Girlfriend Experience*, and *Magic Mike* begins

nonchalantly with the title character engaged in a threesome.

“One of the things I like about the story,” he said in a recent interview at the Film Society of Lincoln Center, “is that none of us wanted to be punitive about the ways people pleasure themselves.” How nice.

So what on earth is he griping about, with all this talk of burnout and wanting to do something else and be a different kind of filmmaker, blah blah blah? Well, that is an interesting question. Four years ago, he released a two-film portrait of Che Guevara starring Benicio Del Toro. Heard of it? You probably haven't, and the experience of making it and having it bomb on release seems to have taken the wind out of Soderbergh's sails.

In the Film Society interview, he says he took on *Magic Mike* because “I had no desire to spend 10 months working on something that was going to be a downer. After *Che*, I felt I had gotten the important movie s— out of my system.” When the interviewer protests, he elaborates: “Self-important would be a better way to put it. Stuff that's conceived with an eye toward an all-categories trade ad at the end of the year.” (“All-categories trade ad” is a reference to Oscar-bait films designed to suggest to Academy voters that they nominate those films in all categories: Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor, Best Communist Guerrilla.)

So, the two *Ches* were “self-important ... stuff ... conceived” to win Oscars. As a result, he decided to retreat into genre material—a thriller like *Contagion*, an action picture like *Haywire*, and a striver-on-the-edges-of-showbiz story like *Magic Mike*. In other words, Soderbergh went off to create a hagiography of a 20th-century monster, found the whole thing unsettling, and decided he needed to live an entirely new life.

He seems to have had the kind of disillusioning experience with a Communist icon that suggests he might be ripe for political conversion. Someone hand that man a copy of Whittaker Chambers's *Witness*! Jon Voight gave it to David Mamet, and he went right-wing. Of course, Soderbergh will have to drop the threesomes. We don't do that sort of thing over here. ♦

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John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, is THE WEEKLY STANDARD's movie critic.

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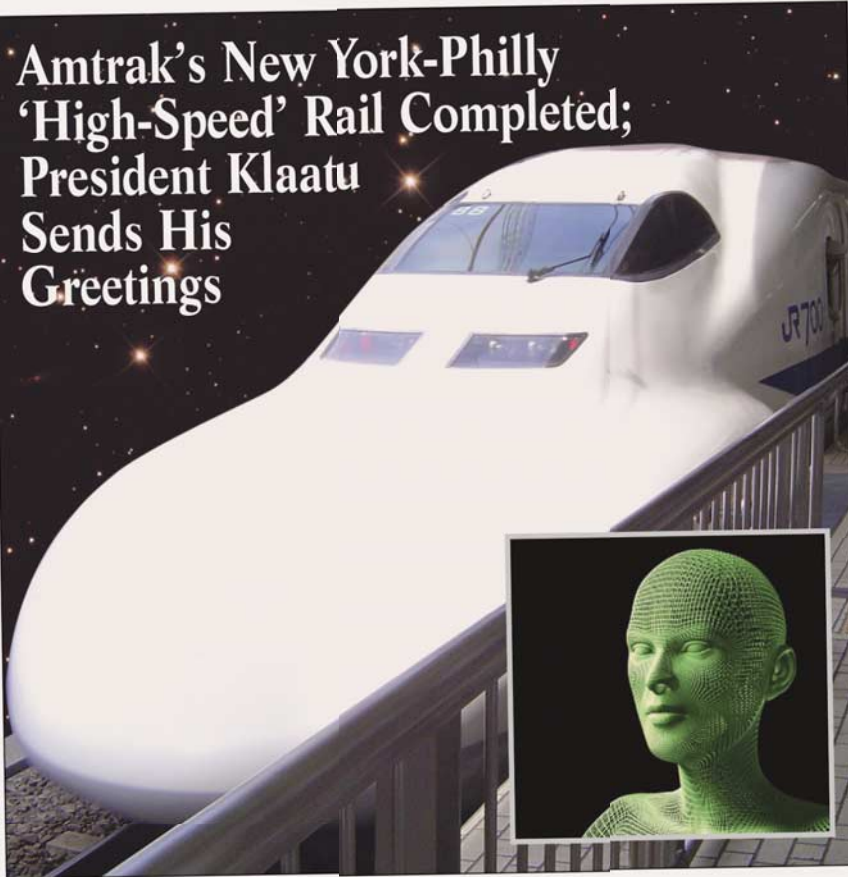
'This time we've really
learned our lesson,' IC

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in Vega, 1D

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**Amtrak's New York-Philly
'High-Speed' Rail Completed;
President Klaatu
Sends His
Greetings**



Pres. Klaatu (inset) welcomed the new Amtrak land-train and laughed at it.

By THX-1138
USA TODAY

PHILADELPHIA — At a ribbon-cutting ceremony near the ancient ruins of 30th Street Station, officials from Amtrak celebrated the arrival of a land-train that took 37 minutes to get here from New York City (the part not controlled by prison inmates). President Klaatu was expected to attend the ceremony but was forced to cancel at the last minute when his teleporter broke down.

Appearing via hologram, the president extended his warmest regards but said the land-train would serve as a reminder of a time when humans were particularly incompetent. "It's a most curious spectacle," said Klaatu, "and a symbol of misspent energy that would have been better used in the battle against the machines"—a reference to the Predator War of 2042, when surveillance drones turned against the citizens they were meant to protect.

Stepping off the land-train, however, was Joseph Biden, still hazy from his recent cryogenic thaw. The former vice president explained to his fellow earthlings what life was like three centuries ago. "Honest to goodness, I rode a railcar just like this from Washington to Wilmington—of course this was before the East Coast was buried under the glaciers of the global cooling apocalypse—but at the time it was a big f—g deal!"

Mr. Biden, who served during two of President Obama's four terms, told reporters he only wished he could have a Philly cheesesteak (a sandwich that was eliminated under the Flavorful Food Ban of 2016).

As for the delay in construction, Amtrak officials cited insufficient federal funding but insisted that nonstop service from New York to Chicago will be a reality by 2437, way ahead of schedule. **see COVER STORY next page ►**

Cover Story

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